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ABSTRACT

This monograph was designed to provide a comprehensive and enlightened view of the community college as it faces complicated new demands. It offers articles written by community college professionals, including the following: (1) "A Journey of Discovery" by Albert L. Lorenzo; (2) "Organizational Readiness: Middle Age and the Middle Way" by Cindy L. Miles; (3) "The Community College as a Learning-Centered Organization" by Cynthia D. Wilson; (4) "The Recovery of Persons" by Sanford C. Shugart; (5) "Cultural Diversity: Symbolism or Inclusion?" by Sandy Sudweeks; (6) "Professional Development for a New Age" by Rose B. Bellanca; (7) "Effecting a Successful Transition of Leadership" by Ronald L. Baker; (8) "What the Experts Say: Leadership in Times of Uncertainty" by Judith A. Maxson; (9) "The Evolving Community College: The Multiple Mission Debate" by Thomas R. Bailey; (10) "Community Colleges in the Public Policy Arena" by Katherine Boswell; (11) "Through the Looking Glass: Future Programming" by Tracy Edwards; (12) "Workforce Development in the Information Economy" by Jim Jacobs; (13) "Connecting to a Changing Community" by Arleen Arnsparger; (14) "Linking Strategic and Financial Planning" by Rufus Glasper; and (15) "A Time for the Community College: 21st Century Dynamics, Trends, and Imperatives" by Mark David Milliron. Articles include resources and references. (NB)

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PERSPECTIVES on the COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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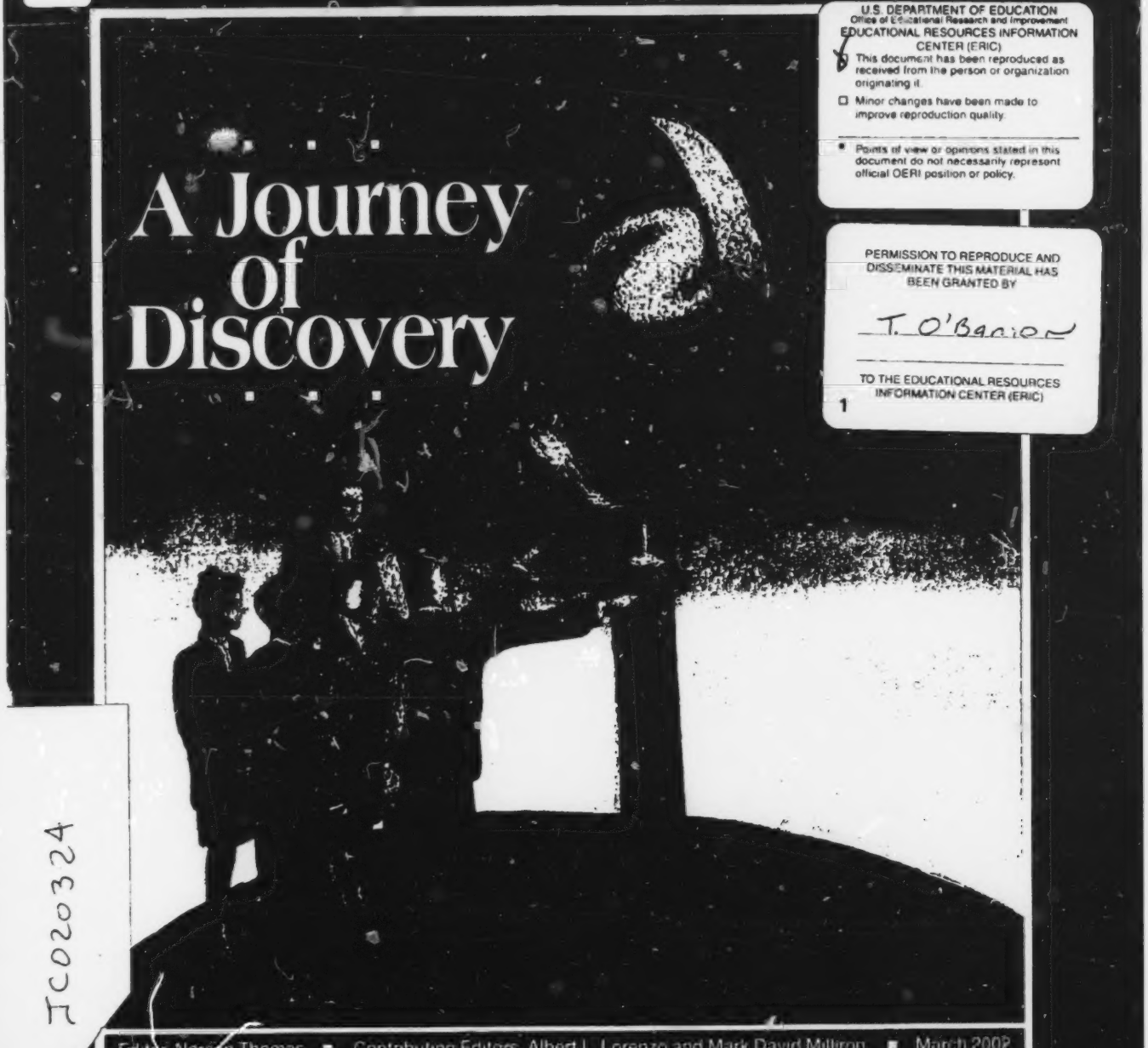

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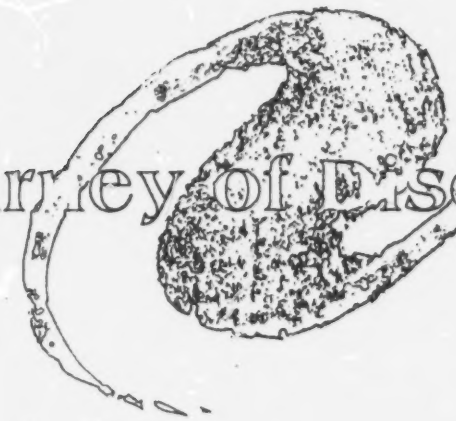

A Journey of Discovery

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Preface

Per-spec'-tives:
...of or relating to vision;
capacity to view things in their true relations or relative importance;
a visible scene; a vista...

Webster's Third New International Dictionary

The changing community college is a way of life for many of us—we've all experienced intensified competition, tightening resources, infusion of technology, and complex demands from diverse student populations. How do we address these issues? What types of skills will we need to successfully compete in a new marketplace? Are our organizations poised to meet this challenge? Sadly, some predict not. However, we'd like to offer a different perspective.

We are about to face an unprecedented opportunity. Our rich community college heritage, coupled with our talented human resources, provide a strong foundation of hope and possibility to a nation of learners. There is no better way to prepare for our future than to examine our past, build upon our strengths, and harness the vision and enthusiasm of staff and community partners. By so doing, we are able to create our future and actualize our mission in new and creative ways.

As community college professionals, we are faced with the continuing challenge of defining our values, adhering to our missions, and focusing on those activities that complement our unique identity. In accepting this challenge, we must develop the ***Will*** to maximize our capacity, cultivate our resources, and rise to our potential. We can do this—it ***Is*** within our reach!

This publication is designed to provide a comprehensive and enlightened view of the future of community colleges. The contributing writers were selected because of their vibrant messages that we believe will resonate with practitioners and contribute to the overall success of community colleges.

On a personal note, I want to thank the individual authors and the contributing editors—Al and Mark—for their thoughtful presentations and their passionate commitment to the profession. Working with each of you was an extremely rich process, and I am most grateful to have had the opportunity. I also want to thank Cynthia Wilson, who helped bring this project along from concept to fruition. Her perspective was most valuable.

I can only hope that as you read this monograph and share it with your staff, you engage in meaningful dialogue throughout your organization. May it bring to you and your college the same synergy, creativity, and satisfaction that it has brought to us.

Enjoy the read!

Noreen Thomas

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A Journey of Discovery

Albert L. Lorenzo
President
Macomb Community College, Michigan

Their centennial year has come to an end, and after an appropriate pause for nostalgic reflection, our nation's community colleges are entering their second century with a rekindled sense of purpose, a renewed understanding of their core values, and a heightened resolve to preserve the open door to higher education. And if the past is any indicator, these uniquely American institutions will continue to lead the way in improving learning and in providing valuable educational, enrichment, and economic development opportunities to the communities that created and continue to embrace them. Rarely has any large-scale enterprise enjoyed such universal acclaim from so many different constituencies.

Our nation's community colleges are entering their second century with a rekindled sense of purpose, a renewed understanding of their core values, and a heightened resolve to preserve the open door to higher education.

Those who were connected with community colleges during the 1960s and 1970s considered themselves to be a part of a movement. Under the banner of open access, these individuals worked tirelessly to tear down the historic economic, academic, and geographic barriers to college participation. This concept was so warmly received that between 1965 and 1975 over 500 two-year colleges were created – an average of one new college each week for an entire decade! That may account for why the old-timers occasionally find themselves reminiscing about life as it used to be.

One reason for the early success of community colleges was their willingness to try new ideas. This should not be confused with whimsy; rather, it was prompted by a keen understanding of what had traditionally limited student success. For example, universities often prided themselves on weeding out students while community colleges explored the means to see students through. University faculty were often centered on research and publications while community college faculty focused on teaching and the classroom. The universities reached out to serve the state and the nation while community colleges responded to the needs in their local communities. In effect, the fledgling two-year colleges respectfully broke ranks with their senior counterparts and embarked on a journey of discovery that continues to this day.

As with many learning experiences, the community college journey has included changes – often dramatic – in conditions along the way. Other than the perennial problems associated with funding, the issues that occupied our time and attention a generation ago are barely discussed today. This inevitable pattern of continuous environmental change prompted our curiosity about

emerging issues and the subsequent creation of the Institute for Future Studies at Macomb Community College in the late 1980s. We believed that if we could identify issues as they were evolving, colleges would have a longer time frame in which to fashion a strategic response and thereby achieve a competitive advantage. Time has proven this to be an accurate assumption.

As the college became more adept at identifying emerging issues, the Institute for Future Studies began to publish its findings so they could be shared with a larger external audience. Most of the Institute's publications have addressed the critical issues facing America's community colleges, and some have dealt with new models for thinking and planning and for leading fundamental change within these institutions. This latest publication, which we are proud to publish jointly with the League for Innovation in the Community College, also addresses emerging issues, but goes one step further. Like the previous works, this monograph is designed to stimulate thinking and foster dialogue among academics and campus decision makers. But it also adds a new dimension – *personal perspectives* – from experienced professionals within the field.

Gaining Perspective

In developing this publication, the task given to me – probably assigned more on the basis of seniority than competency – was putting these perspectives in perspective. Loving the alliteration, I accepted, and what quickly became apparent was that all of them could be seen as helpful guideposts along our continuing journey of discovery. I was also struck by what may be a shortcoming in the educational system.

Throughout history, societies have produced many different kinds of people who are primarily invested in the future. They are the people who are deeply engaged in journeys of discovery. In a geographical context we call them explorers. In the physical world we call them inventors, and in the metaphysical world they are philosophers. In medicine and in the sciences we call them researchers, and in enterprise we call them innovators. Even if their pursuits appear impractical, we may still show some respect by calling them dreamers. The point is, in so many areas there are people whose primary occupation is the future – what it may be, when it may happen, and most importantly, how to make it better. It is striking that there is no parallel position in education.

Certainly we all know that research is being conducted and educational philosophy developed. And we all know there are educational dreamers, but often they reside outside the profession. The fact remains that institutions and governments, corporations and communities, rarely employ people full-time to conduct journeys of discovery in education. So to the extent this is being done, it is typically the busy practitioner leading the way, much like many of the contributors to this publication.

As you review the thoughts and ideas of these leading thinkers, you will likely see some patterns and themes begin to emerge. So to help put the perspectives into perspective, let me guide you toward some of these central themes.

Social Purpose. Schools, colleges, and universities are all social institutions. They were created by society and continue to receive public support because they are intended to serve social purposes. But both Cindy Miles and Sandy Shugart talk about organizational life cycles and how organizations tend to behave differently as they mature. Predictably, mature organizations can be tempted to put their own survival ahead of their original purpose. Shugart suggests this occurs because, as they mature, organizations take on lives of their own, and they act in ways to assure their survival, even at the expense of their mission. Miles believes that "middle age" can also be a time of growing uncertainty.

Organizational life cycle theory tells us that the stage of maturity is predictably followed by either a stage of renewal or a period of decline, sometimes even to the point of extinction. It also tells us there is no specific time frame for an organization to remain in, or pass through, each of its life cycle stages. We have a recent example of just how quickly this can occur. Consider many of the dot.coms – birth to growth to maturity to decline and demise – all in a matter of months. The leading business schools will be writing about this phenomenon for years to come. Fortunately, public organizations generally fall to the other end of the life cycle continuum.

The lesson here is quite important. Organizations intensify their risk of decline when they begin to place their own purposes ahead of the purposes that gave them life. For public institutions, particularly community colleges, the risk increases when the institutions begin to place their own purposes ahead of the social purposes for which they were created. Know of any colleges like that?

Organizations intensify their risk of decline when they begin to place their own purposes ahead of the purposes that gave them life.

Sandy Sudweeks' perspectives on educating students to function effectively in a rapidly changing and culturally diverse world and Jim Jacobs' view of critical workforce development needs in the information economy both provide excellent examples of contemporary and laudable social purposes. But being asked to shape a more perfect society is not new to education.

From their inception, schools have been asked to take the lead in social reform efforts. Noah Webster's famous *Blue Back Speller* changed the spelling and pronunciation of our language when we gained our independence from the British. Early schools used textbooks that espoused and perpetuated Puritan beliefs. In the 1950s and 1960s, schools were chosen to be the place to end segregation in our society. Today they are being asked to assure equality, excellence, and our economic well being.

Colleges are not completely free to set their own agendas. Society's expectations are often prescribed through public policy. Katherine Boswell reminds us that, by their very nature, community colleges are creations of public policy with the balance of power between local and state entities creating differing governance and funding patterns. As a result, not every institution enjoys the same freedom to chart its course. She provides her perspectives on several current public policy issues and warns us that difficult choices will present themselves as colleges try to balance burgeoning social needs with limited capacities for response.

Because of their unique influence on generational thinking, schools will remain preferred vehicles for social change. As educators, we share an awesome responsibility and a precious opportunity: *Those who shape the mind, shape the future of the nation.*

Multitude of Missions. Tom Bailey thoughtfully presents his perspectives on what may well be the cornerstone issue of the day. Social purposes are translated into actionable plans through statements of mission. During their first century, two-year colleges continued to expand their missions into the comprehensive institutions they pride themselves as being today. Virtually everything they did – transfer, career, developmental, and community education, workforce and economic development, cultural affairs – was additive. So if the move to become more comprehensive was a strategy for success in the past, a key question is whether it will continue to lead to success in the future. Will focusing on a multitude of missions preclude excellence in any one aspect of mission? Is there a core mission for community colleges? And most importantly, if colleges in the past grew by addition, will they now have to grow by substitution? There are cogent arguments on all sides.

Because of their unique influence on generational thinking, schools will remain preferred vehicles for social change.

As Bailey points out, most of the mission debate centers around the compatibility of transfer and career education; that is, does the focus on occupational education undermine the more traditional transfer function? Jim Jacobs' perspectives on workforce development reflect the thinking of those who commend the vocational emphasis. Like others, Jacobs suggests that the current emphasis on workforce and economic development programs distinguishes community colleges from other postsecondary providers, positions them more favorably with various constituencies, and often generates new resources for the institution.

Tracy Edwards, with both faculty and administrative experience in transfer and career disciplines, provides valuable perspectives on achieving curriculum and programmatic balance within the multiple mission environment. For example, making students work-ready may not make them transfer-ready, and in the long run may prove to be a detriment to their future career development. Edwards challenges community colleges to define the competencies required by both transfer institutions and the employment market, and to reengineer today's academic programs to provide learning opportunities that will maximize student preparedness.

Clearly the sentiment among most of the contributors is to keep expanding the mission and role of community colleges. But Rufus Glasper, commenting from a business officer's perspective, suggests that institutions thrive when they are able to integrate systems of strategic and financial planning. That may be a polite way of saying that colleges frequently get themselves into trouble

when they set out to do what they simply can't afford to do (or continue to do). To follow a "do it now and fund it later" philosophy is a high-risk strategy in today's resource-restricted environment. Glasper believes that any negative perceptions about a college can be compounded when expenditures are not clearly linked to needs, and he suggests a multistep approach to help close the gap.

To follow a "do it now and fund it later" philosophy is a high-risk strategy in today's resource-restricted environment.

At the same time, we have to acknowledge that most people who choose a career in the nonprofit sector do so because they have some degree of missionary zeal. Some actually become maniacs for a mission. But everyone within the institution needs to understand the fundamental mission-margin principle, taught to me years ago by a very astute Sister of Charity. Sitting around the board table, we listened patiently as the president of the hospital eloquently stated all of the reasons why they had to expand their mission to meet pressing health care needs in the region, regardless of the cost. The Sister, who was the treasurer of the Order, respectfully said, "I genuinely appreciate that, but you also have to appreciate something – in the long run, no margin, no mission."

No More Know-It-Alls. Time was when a college education was an adequate preparation for a lifetime career, not just in education, but also in most fields of employment. We know that's all changed, and many of the contributors make that point. Today, everyone within the organization needs to invest in learning, but very few colleges have been able to sustain effective professional development programs.

Rose Bellanca points out that the primary goal of professional development is to change individuals' knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, and behaviors *with a clear focus on achieving the goals of the institution*. In other words, it's not learning for the individual's sake, it's learning for the organization's sake. That may be one of the most common misunderstandings on our campuses today. For example, a faculty sabbatical to study abroad or to write a book may be a worthwhile endeavor, but from Bellanca's perspective, to be meaningful professional development, such activities should be one component of a more comprehensive process that is aligned with organizational goals.

Bellanca also believes that trained specialists should lead results-based professional development programs. Assigning this function to a specific position in the organization reinforces the college's commitment to human resources, establishes professional development as an institutional priority, and adds guiding expertise to this complex process. Additionally, she reminds us that the college's

senior leadership team must honestly support and model the concepts and practices embedded in a professional development program. I think Peter Senge would agree.

Learners and Learning. If community college leaders had to identify a single issue that characterized the 1990s, most would probably say it was the emerging concept of the learning-centered college. Cynthia Wilson, who has been intimately involved with that concept from its inception, provides some excellent insight from the vantage of her unique perspective.

If anything has inhibited progress in becoming more learning centered, it may be the persistent debate over the differences between focusing on *teaching* or *learning*, and if the emphasis is purely semantic. Some would argue that it really doesn't matter what you call it, since the outcomes are the same. Possibly the only quicker way to start a debate on campus is to ask whether we should consider students as customers.

Wilson's perspectives deserve careful reading, since learning-centeredness is likely to be an enduring issue. Rarely has an idea initially perceived to be so subtle had the potential of bringing about fundamental change in community colleges.

The King Stands Alone. A popular children's game of a bygone day was based on a simple process of elimination that continued until, as one version of the song said, "The King stands alone." In the game of contemporary community college issues, many would argue, "Technology stands alone."

Many writers in this monograph weave through their texts a seasoned perspective on this king of issues. Their views introduce several sub-issues, which in turn move my thinking to a short collection of *Technology Truths*:

- Technology cannot be ignored
- Technology transforms everything it touches
- Technology, for now, has created a new class system
- Technology will eventually be nothing more than a tool
- Technology provides unimagined opportunities
- Technology will transform learning

Just for a moment, consider how stone tablets, papyrus, movable type, printing presses, telephones, radios, televisions, the Internet, and satellites have each transformed our capabilities for communication. Then consider the possibilities that emerging technologies offer to transform education. Now consider leading a journey of discovery.

Know Thy Neighbor. Being community-based organizations, the primary measure for success should be how well colleges serve the specific needs of their communities. But to serve a community, an institution must first know the community. Arleen Arnsparger provides some excellent insight into how to gain that knowledge.

...the "changing" community college will be more closely connected with its community, continually learning more about its ever-changing composition.

Arnsparger believes that the "changing" community college will be more closely connected to its community, continually learning more about its ever-changing composition. It will also be more adept at anticipating and responding, and while quantitative information will help, colleges will need to get beneath the data and make eye contact with their constituents. Listening to people is just as important as looking at the data.

As communities become more distinct, colleges will be less able to rely on generalized outreach programs. Specific programs must be developed for specific situations. This suggestion amplifies the value of situational leadership, and as the trend toward community diversity grows, it will be more difficult to borrow another college's plans and programs. We will eventually be left to figure most things out for ourselves.

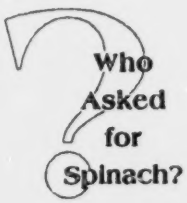
Leading the Way. The impending retirements of large numbers of faculty and administrators are a serious concern for many community colleges. Studies project that anywhere from one-third to one-half of these seasoned professionals will leave their positions within the next five years. Unfortunately, the forecasts for the available pool of replacements are not encouraging.

Ron Baker has studied the challenge of attracting replacements for institutional leaders, and he believes that the issue is not simply one of recruitment. He suggests that candidate-to-institution fit is also essential. Baker describes fit as the alignment of values, attitudes, and attributes between the individual and the institution. He shares his views on evaluating fit and on utilizing an outcomes-based hiring process.

Dan DeMarte offers additional insight into the leadership challenge through a review of current literature on the subject. He points to attributes that are enduring, skills that are adaptable, and findings that suggest that most successful leaders place ambition for the organization ahead of their ambition for self. DeMarte concludes that colleges need leaders who embody enduring attributes, possess adaptive skills, and can craft and implement situational strategies which respond to the unique needs of their colleges and communities.

Finally, Judith Maxson illustrates through a literature review how restaffing can aid institutional transformation by forcing a critical reexamination of traditional faculty and staff roles within the college. She highlights the possibility that one of the best opportunities to shape the future may come from a well-designed human resource plan, and that we might want to begin hiring for attitude to complement required skills.

Being Human. Coming full circle, we again turn to the perspectives of Cindy Miles and Sandy Shugart, this time to contemplate the importance of remembering our humanity. Educational institutions are intensely human systems; we enlist people to serve people. In a quantitative sense, most community colleges spend upwards of 80 percent of their resources on staff. From a qualitative perspective, virtually 100 percent of what we do is intended to improve the quality of lives.



Although colleges invest considerable effort in gathering data, conducting studies, measuring outcomes, and analyzing results, we must not lose sight of the fact that, as human beings, we make decisions and react to situations with our heads, our hearts, and even our souls. We probably see this most clearly in our roles as consumers or voters. Logic is often where we begin, but emotions and values soon influence our perception. Shugart advises us to be a person, to serve a person, and to love our values more than our systems. Miles tells us to strive for balance, to recognize *the power of and*, and to develop visions that appeal to both the head and the heart.

Who Asked for Spinach? When I was a child, dinnertime was an appropriately formal affair. Not fancy, understand, but a classic scene from a 1950s family TV show. Once we were seated, we would generally ask for what we wanted to eat. One evening, however, when I came to the table, there was already an adult-sized portion of spinach on my plate. When I politely protested that I hadn't asked for the spinach, my mother told me she knew that, but she had put it on my plate because it was good for me.

Like my childhood spinach, most major issues confronting community colleges today are things these colleges haven't asked for. Typically, more than three-quarters of the forces driving change now originate from external sources. We haven't asked for more accountability, public disclosure, or performance-based funding. We sometimes shudder at legislative mandates and public policy initiatives. But like our green vegetables, we are told, they are good for us. Maybe they are.

The Future. Yogi Berra is credited with reminding us that the future isn't what it used to be. Just the same, it is critically important to everyone. The future is the only part of us that is still perfect and unblemished. Though some of us try, we can't rewrite history; we can, however, shape the future. For many of us, anticipating a brighter future is our primary source of hope and inspiration.

As CEO of the League for Innovation, Mark Milliron enjoys a broad and unique perspective of community colleges. Milliron believes that if these institutions can leverage key dynamics, respond to major trends, and embrace certain imperatives, they will be able to serve students, communities, and nations in ways that portend a better tomorrow for all. His enthusiasm for the immediate future is so strong that he proclaims it to be "a time for community colleges." Many would agree.

While there is logic in its design, this publication does not have to be read in sequential order to provide value. Feel free to chart your own course. You may want to begin with a look to the future and then return to issues of the present day. You might want to explore your personal interests first and defer others to another time. Whichever path you choose, remember that the perspectives presented are intended to promote dialogue about change and improvements.

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perfect and unblemished....For many of us,
anticipating a brighter future is our primary source of
hope and inspiration.

In concluding, I'd like to paraphrase some of the thoughts of author Charles Handy and futurist Marvin Cetron. Handy (1994) observes that every generation sees itself as being fundamentally different from the one which came before, but tends to plan as though the next generation will be the same. Cetron (1989) suggests that many of the problems we face today continue, not because we can't find solutions, but because we lack the collective will to address them. So a final bit of advice to the travelers on our journey of discovery: Let's employ the wisdom of our years to create and implement strong plans, while being careful not to stifle the ideas and aspirations of those who will follow. And let's admit that some of the greatest barriers to progress come not from our ignorance, but from our unwillingness to change.

Resources and References

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Organizational Readiness: Middle Age and the Middle Way

Cindy L. Miles
Vice President, Senior Program Officer
League for Innovation in the Community College, Arizona

> We don't have to know the future in order to be prepared for it.
> *Margaret Wheatley, 1992*

A classic view of organizational readiness suggests environmental scanning, strategic planning, and staff development as tonics against the current contagion of change. The unprecedented convergence of issues confronting today's colleges, however, presents a nonlinear world of change calling for nontraditional approaches. Rather than swift response or transformation, 21st century community colleges might be better served to step back and undertake a series of measured reflections about their history, habits, and commitments to sharpen their focus and heighten their readiness for the future.

A number of learning and organizational theorists extol the value of *slow knowing*, intuition, and holistic reflection over rapid logic and analysis to make sense of complex situations (Fullan, 2001; Senge et al., 1999; Weick, 1995). From an organizational perspective, such deliberate sensemaking may be the most crucial skill a community college can develop to maintain equilibrium in this era of continuous change. The understanding that emerges from deep, strategic reflection can help steer a college through uncertainties of policy, funding, enrollments, staffing, competition, and markets.

> Ultimately, this exploration of the heart – a cultural inquiry into shared values, practices, and traditions that drive the institution – enables the college as a community to care for its members and adapt more naturally to its complex, changing environment.

As an inclusive enterprise, such introspection reinforces a college's essential nature as a community of learners and provides an opening into the heart of the organization. Ultimately, this exploration of the heart – a cultural inquiry into shared values, practices, and traditions that drive the institution – enables the college as a community to care for its members and adapt more naturally to its complex, changing environment.

Middle Age in Muddling Times

One starting place for reflective inquiry is the confluence of internal and external change factors in today's community colleges. In the midst of major social, political, and economic changes reshaping all of higher education, community colleges are undergoing significant midlife passages. The educators and leaders who helped establish the country's two-year colleges in the 1960s and 1970s are retiring in record numbers. Observers voice concern about the passing of the torch – not only of the collective experience and knowledge but also of the commitment to the ideals of democracy's college. For some institutions this middle-age transition is a midlife crisis; for others it is a time for renewal.

Compounding the situation is the cultural stasis common among midlife organizations. As community colleges matured, they refined their norms, processes, subcultures, and ways of interacting with their environments. These cultural elements set them apart from other educational institutions and helped them flourish. However, as internal and external environments change, these defining characteristics and practices may become outdated. The challenge for the midlife organization, Schein (1999) says, is to resist the natural tendency to cling to habits that made it successful and to recognize that the very factors that shaped early success can trigger midlife failure. A community college coping with midlife challenges could benefit from distinguishing its cultural elements with enduring value from those that have become dysfunctional and need to be unlearned.

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A promising strategy for such cultural analysis is Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a process that replaces classic problem-based analysis of institutional deficiencies with large-scale collaborative exploration of what is working *well* within an organization. Based on a philosophy of positive change, AI contends that the most rapid, systemic way to improve a human system is to build connections between its members, its positive core of capabilities, achievements, and wisdom, and its vision of a preferred future. Midlife community colleges might follow the lead of hundreds of businesses, schools, and nonprofit organizations that have used AI practices to leverage their high points of personal and collective capacity to meet external changes forces and internal needs for cultural continuity. (Watkins & Moore, 2001)

The Power of And

Organizational readiness also means finding balance among the multitude of demands that put individual and institutional values to the test. Under pressure, community colleges face classic value conflicts between competing commitments to access and excellence, quality and efficiency, and equity and cost (Marshall, Mitchell, & Wirt, 1989). Rapidly evolving workforce needs, shifting political requirements, and new competitors in the postsecondary market call for nimble, responsive, and fluid college systems. Simultaneous pressure is rising for colleges to provide real evidence of performance, performance that is increasingly tied to funding. Cries for better, faster, cheaper run headlong into demands for quality and opportunity for all.

Complicating these external dynamics are longstanding rival institutional issues of academic education vs. technical training, honors vs. developmental studies, high tech vs. high touch services, and internal vs. external focus. Daily tensions arise in classrooms and offices as faculty, staff, and administrators strive to achieve balance between fiscal responsibility and growth, accountability and autonomy, consistency and personalization, and research and action. On top of it all, individuals across campus seek to quiet the conflict between their professional and personal lives.

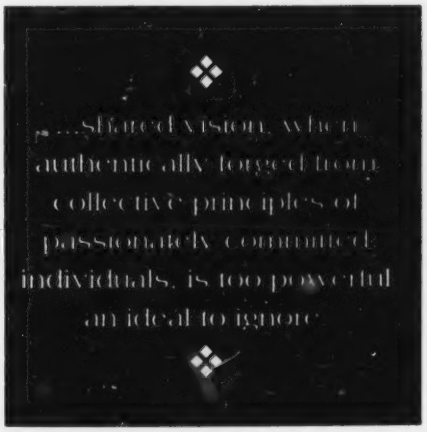
Mark Milliron talks about getting comfortable with the messiness in the middle of these competing personal and organizational commitments. Similarly, Alfred and Carter (1999) call for examining the continuum between seemingly opposing choices and embracing the "contradictory community college." Zen Buddhist traditions teach The Middle Way as a balanced path through the everyday world of dualities and confusion.

A community college on its path to organizational readiness might pave such a Middle Way by holding a series of strategic dialogues to illuminate personal and collective meanings associated with key issues. These conversations should be designed to aim for *and* rather than *or* responses to habitual controversies and to promote recognition of natural organizational complexities. By growing in understanding of individual and systemic motivations inherent in these tensions, a campus community builds skills in managing ambiguity and respecting differences. In addition, it begins shaping a collective sense of purpose and the capacity to change.

A New Shared Vision

Shared vision, an inspiring articulation of what could be, galvanizes individuals to collective enactment of this possible dream and is the hallmark of transformational leaders and exceptional organizations (Roueche, Baker, & Rose, 1989). Such a "vision worth working toward," as Steve Gilbert of the TLT Group calls it, is generated from agreed-upon beliefs about the values and purpose of the organization. The language of shared vision trips lightly off the tongues of most college administrators today. Unfortunately, these words trigger rolled eyes and bored groans from many who hear them as empty incantations and PR sound bytes. Too often the ideals of collaborative purpose are lost in ritualized "MVVG (mission, vision, values, and goals) sessions" or shelved in forgotten documents.

Despite distrust, shared vision, when authentically forged from collective principles of passionately committed individuals, is too powerful an ideal to ignore. Such a commonly held commitment to making a difference is key to community college progress, as well as to the satisfaction and success of students and employees who look to the college for the promise of better lives. If done honestly, even the effort toward collective purpose helps fulfill fundamental needs for belonging and contribution.


"...shared vision, when authentically forged from collective principles of passionately committed individuals, is too powerful an ideal to ignore"

The hunger for higher purpose has been on the rise in public and private workplaces and draws many to serve in community colleges. Such purpose is about much more than fostering a hospitable campus environment. It is equally about aligning our actions with the principles we hold most dear. It is about coming together to grapple with tough questions and competing demands. It is about agreeing on expectations and committing to measurable outcomes for our students and ourselves. It is about finding new ways to distribute power and responsibility to avoid old organizational *chains of blame*. It is about fostering *cultures of evidence* to guide our decisions and development. It is about building trustworthy systems and treating individuals with care and respect.

The community college practicing reflective inquiry as an approach to organizational readiness knows itself and its environment, honors its past by building on its successes, sheds habits and practices it no longer needs, and uses *the power of and* to balance conflicting demands and values. Most important, this college embodies a deep collective concern for the organization and its ideals as well as for the people who form its heart, a shared vision of a high performing and humane community of learners.

At Your Institution Discussion Points

- What fundamental values, purpose, and principles do we share as a community of learners? How are our core principles and values demonstrated in our programs, policies, and practices?
- What midlife challenges are we facing as a college? How can we prepare for these challenges in the context of our core principles and values?
- What habits or traditions do we need to unlearn that no longer serve our values or goals?
- What are we doing exceptionally well as an institution that we can build upon to design our future success?
- How can we come together to create a more humane and high-performing organization?

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The Community College as a Learning-Centered Organization

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Responding to pressures for improved accountability in undergraduate education during the 1990s, a handful of community college scholars and practitioners started a conversation that examined the focus of two-year institutions. Barr and Tagg (1995) began the discussion by suggesting that the longstanding designation of community colleges as teaching institutions be replaced by an organizational focus on learning. Reaction ranged from hasty defense – "We've always been focused on learning!" – to thoughtful examination of institutional policies and practices. In many cases, colleges that took an honest look at themselves found that, although their ultimate purpose was education, their policies and practices were not always best designed to promote learning.

Continuing the learning conversation, O'Banion (1995-96) presented the learning college as an institution that "places learning first and provides learning opportunities anyway, anyplace, anytime" (p. 22). He offered six principles on which such a college would be based, including the creation of "substantive change in individual learners" by providing multiple options for learning, enabling students to take responsibility for their own learning choices, and using learner needs to determine personnel roles (O'Banion, 1997, p. 47). Evidence of substantive change in learners would be gathered through authentic assessment of individual student learning and documented in clear statements of student achievement and samples of student work; this evidence would indicate the success of the learning-centered institution (O'Banion, 1997).

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Concurrent with, and in some cases as a result of, this learning conversation, community colleges across the country initiated or enhanced "anyway, anyplace, anytime" programs such as weekend college, off-campus courses, online offerings, and learning communities. However, providing multiple options for learning is only part – and arguably the easier part – of the learning college concept. The fundamental element is "placing learning first," the focus on learning that extends throughout the organization. Community colleges that have embarked on the journey to become more learning centered are finding that placing learning first presents challenges of organizational transformation that extend far beyond variety in course scheduling. Indeed, these challenges impact every aspect of the college (McClenney, 2001).

Why Bother?

Despite the difficulties of making learning central to the college, the need for collegewide concentration on learning is real. The forces that prompted community colleges leaders to develop and promote the ideas of the learning-centered college are still demanding that colleges be

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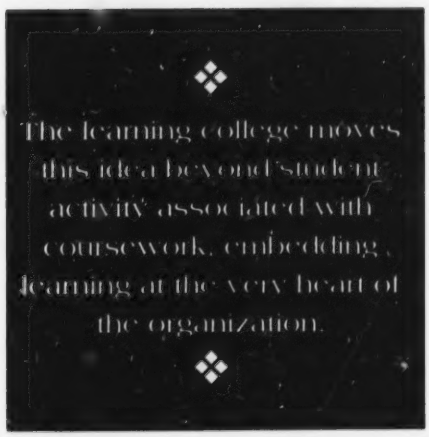
accountable for individual student learning, and few community colleges are able to provide adequate evidence that learning has taken place (Wilson et al., 2000).

Funding agents, accrediting bodies, employers, and constituents want to ensure that the institutions they endorse are producing graduates who are capable not only of living and working in today's environment but also of adapting to meet the needs of tomorrow's world. The learning-centered education movement provides an answer for colleges seeking ways to meet requirements levied by internal and external forces: the systematic collection of evidence that provides an increased capacity for the college, and for individual students within the college, to demonstrate that specifically defined learning has occurred.


The learning college moves this idea beyond student activity associated with coursework, embedding learning at the very heart of the organization.

Developing a Culture of Learning

Chickering and Gamson (1987) list "encouraging active learning" as one of the seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education, holding that students engaged in active learning "talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences....apply it to their daily lives....[and] make what they learn part of themselves." The learning college moves this idea beyond student activity associated with coursework, embedding learning at the very heart of the organization. In the learning-centered organization, all members of the college talk and write about learning as well as relate and apply it to their work.

Support. To ensure that learning is the primary focus throughout the college, support for learning-centered education occurs at all levels. Fundamental support is achieved by building learning college principles into strategic plans and developing budgets that sustain the implementation of those plans across the college. Since many community college educators have acquired expertise in an academic discipline, vocational art, or administrative skill but have received little pedagogical training, professional development is a primary element in the strategic plan and the budget. And since all college employees are engaged in efforts to improve and expand learning, all employees are involved in professional development programs that help them define and enact their roles as learning facilitators.

Outcome-Based Learning. To document substantive change, faculty and staff first develop clear statements of learning outcomes, the knowledge, skills, and abilities a successful student will acquire in a course or program. Once outcomes are clearly stated, learning environments and experiences are designed to help students acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to demonstrate achievement of those outcomes (Baker, 2001).

Learning outcomes are developed for various levels: college, program, course, and student. Members of the college identify a set of overarching learning outcomes that are grounded in institutional values and embedded in program, course, and individual student learning outcomes. At the course level, faculty and staff define specific learning outcomes and develop learning experiences designed to ensure that all students who take a particular course are correctly placed, are appropriately challenged, are able to achieve the outcomes at acceptable levels, and are prepared for future learning experiences. (Baker, 2001; Stiehl & Lewchuck, 2000) Assisted by an advisor, the individual student identifies a set of personal learning outcomes and a plan for achieving those outcomes. The student and advisor monitor student outcomes and plans, revise them as needed, and document progress.

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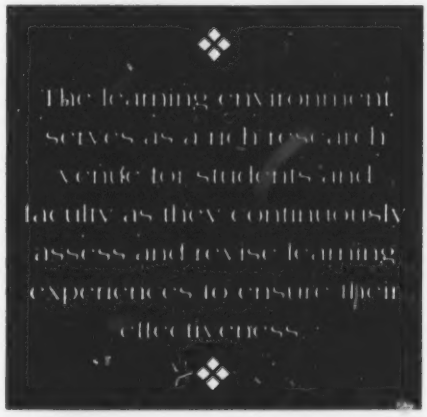
As an individual student achieves outcomes, the level of achievement is documented in clear statements of individual student accomplishments. Annotated transcripts include lists of acquired knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as portfolio-style demonstrations of student capabilities. Grades are not necessarily obsolete; however, with the outcomes necessary to achieve a grade or level clearly stated, they become more meaningful than a broadly defined A, B, or C.

In the learning-centered college, faculty, staff, and students become leaders of learning, shaping and shifting the leadership responsibility as appropriate.

Leadership. In the learning-centered college, faculty, staff, and students become leaders of learning, shaping and shifting the leadership responsibility as appropriate. Faculty and staff lead the development of learning environments and experiences, acting as resource coordinators, monitors and supporters of learners and learning, and assessors and evaluators of student learning. The learning environments extend beyond real and virtual classrooms to onsite and online resources such as libraries, tutoring centers, and mentor programs. Learning experiences include a variety of activities ranging from traditional lectures and exams to collaborative and service learning. (Wilson, 1999)

Within well-defined parameters, students also have leadership opportunities as they take responsibility for and control of their own learning. In these environments, the student growth experience includes learning to define personal learning goals and becoming true partners in developing and implementing learning activities. This does not absolve faculty and staff of their responsibilities in supporting individual student learning; rather, it expands the scope of responsibility for learning by engaging the learner more fully in the learning process.


The learning environment serves as a rich research venue for students and faculty as they continuously assess and revise learning experiences to ensure their effectiveness.

Research. Authentically assessed and appropriately documented individual student learning provides data for accountability requirements, but learning college research is not limited to the institutional research office. The learning environment serves as a rich research venue for students and faculty as they continuously assess and revise learning experiences to ensure their effectiveness. Similarly, faculty and staff routinely monitor and evaluate courses and support services across terms, using their findings to improve courses and programs.

Making the Journey

Those involved in the learning college movement often refer to the process of becoming more learning centered as a journey. Making this journey is one way community colleges are responding to pressures to ensure student learning and to provide meaningful evidence of that learning. Colleges that embark on the journey can certainly learn from those that have gone before; however, the distinctive features of each college's culture often require that individual institutions create their own paths. Members of a college community can begin by engaging in conversations on learning (O'Banion & Milliron, 2001) and by taking an honest, thorough, and perhaps difficult look at the work they are doing and the ways they are doing it. Through these discussions, they can determine where they are on the learning journey and begin to map a course that will take them where they want to be.

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At Your Institution Discussion Points

- Identify elements of your college culture that reflect a focus on learning and those elements that do not.
- Identify strategies that your college's planning and budgeting processes can employ to support a culture of learning within current funding parameters.
- In what specific and realistic ways can your college be structured to promote and ensure learning at all levels of the organization?
- How is learning defined in your institution, and in what ways is the documentation of student learning a thorough and meaningful representation of individual student learning?

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The Recovery of Persons

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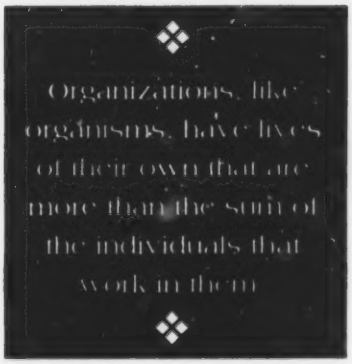
"Organization kills spirit" (Greenleaf). There's a cheerful thought for the future of our colleges. In the context of Greenleaf's argument, however, this was meant to convey something essential about the behavior of our institutions as they mature.

Greenleaf would argue that our great institutions are both the glory and the bane of the modern era. Until the last century, only the very wealthy could count on access to services we take for granted. Education, health care, social services, and even ordinary access to many consumer goods and services simply wasn't available to the masses until our society began to perfect the great institutions we take for granted. Our colleges, schools, hospitals, and other servant institutions are to be celebrated as, perhaps, the greatest achievements of the twentieth century. On the other hand, they can be dreadful places. They can exploit, use, manipulate, and dehumanize the very souls they were created to serve. They do this because organizations, like organisms, have lives of their own that are more than the sum of the individuals who work in them. They will act in ways that assure their survival, even at the expense of their mission.



It is no wonder that a defining characteristic of the postmodern era is alienation and cynical distrust of institutions. The old industrial model of institutional life depersonalized people by treating them like cattle: nameless, faceless, numbered units. In a myriad of institutional details, efficiency outweighed authenticity in serving those for whom we were created. It seems certain, in hindsight, that if people are treated often enough and authoritatively enough as merely a number, they will ultimately come to behave that way.

Now that we have entered the postmodern era of organizational life, our institutions are adopting the habits, technologies, and perspectives of the postmodern marketplace. The new paradigm is dominated by consumer capitalism that marries the view of *everyone as customer* with *powerful technologies* such as database marketing, virtual commerce, and product branding. These tools can be used to customize our response to meet the needs of those we serve. However, more often than not, they are used simply to stimulate their appetite for something we have to sell. It is hard to imagine a trend more destructive of authentic community and civic virtues.

In our colleges, such technologies are manifested in systems such as enrollment management, direct mail, automated telephone communication systems, and web-portal technologies that seek to gather information on our students and convert it into a strategic market advantage. In the end, students are treated as units of consumption and the educational enterprise reduced to a retail operation. Such culture ultimately creeps into every area of the organization, including the classroom. The potential of this outcome argues persuasively against viewing students as customers.

The question, then, of how we use these new tools and how we shape institutional culture in the service of students and society is of great moment. Since we are serving the first generation of truly postmodern students, the challenge to our colleges is to reclaim the *truly personal* in our work. We must adopt a set of radical notions about authentic service that can transform the use of tools at our disposal. Students deserve a unique response, and it is possible that these new technologies and systems can enable us to render just that. I offer three such principles here, with a limited discussion of each: be a person, serve a person, and love your values more than your systems.

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Value and nurture a deeply respectful culture in the classroom, student to teacher, teacher to student, and student to student.

Be a Person

Institutions do not render authentic human service, only persons do. The institution is only a set of tools, an environment that enables persons to do this work better. Here are some ways a community college might assure that it is behaving personally.

Ruthlessly avoid all forms of automation that depersonalize the students and staff. If you have a computer telephoning your students during their dinner hour to deliver a canned message, hand it over to the Luddites and hold a ritual burning! Always provide a name when you are serving, a real name of the real person rendering the service. Create a culture of personal freedom in your staff to do the right thing in service to others fearlessly, regardless of what the rules and procedures may dictate. Enrich the personal dignity of front-line staff. No one can serve persons well if they are burned out, angry, bitter, and feel that they are being manipulated themselves. Value and nurture a deeply respectful culture in the classroom, student to teacher, teacher to student, and student to student. Recognize that this may take many forms, from friendly and informal to rather formal and professional. The style can vary greatly, but the principle of respect should be indelible.

Serve a Person

You cannot serve a group, a class, a population, or even a community. You can only serve persons. Ideally, every interaction at the institution should be marked by a deep commitment to recognize the unique personhood of every student and staff member. Here are some easy examples.

Every communication from the institution should be personalized to the individual receiving it. In other words, no "occupant" or "dear student" mail should be tolerated unless it is absolutely unavoidable. Fortunately, this is where powerful, integrated databases can help us personalize the college. Similarly, the person receiving the communication should be able to respond to the originator directly.

Persons, unlike numbers, exercise choice. So, be sure that they are given real choices to make about how they will engage the college, conduct business with the college, and get the help they need to navigate the organization. Use the tools to understand and capture the preferences students have for being served and try to honor these. This may mean creating systems that allow students to opt out of what may be most efficient to the college if they find it unhelpful or disrespectful.

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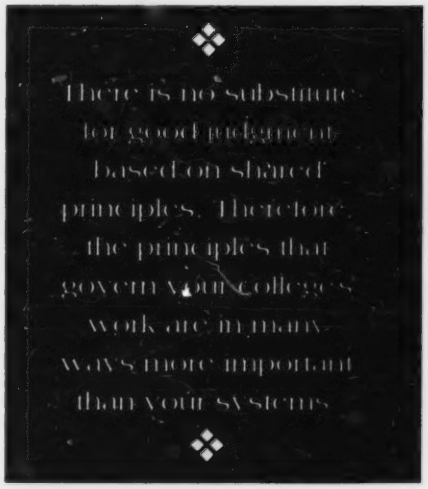
Love Your Values More Than Your Systems

"Sure, but if I did this for you, I'd have to do it for everybody." Who hasn't heard this excuse for a decision that is otherwise unsupportable? It reveals the very bedrock of bureaucratic dysfunction. The college staff has to feel free to do the right thing for each student, even if it means breaking a rule to maintain a value.

Because serving means rendering a unique response, our rules and procedures will always be inadequate. There is no substitute for good judgment based on shared principles. Therefore, the principles that govern your college's work are in many ways more important than your systems. This is why they should be discussed, written, revisited, and discussed again, not at mission-writing time, but in the midst of the real decisions. Before making a budget or designing a building or starting the recruitment and hiring process, the college should agree on what the actions should mean when they are completed. We call these design principles in our processes. They are born out of powerful conversations that involve not just articulating values, but challenging the ways the college attempts to serve. Our best value statements come from our *con*fessions, not our *pro*fessions. When this kind of attention to values becomes common in your organization, it is easier to trust the people than the procedures.


There is no substitute for good judgment based on shared principles. Therefore, the principles that govern your college's work are in many ways more important than your systems.

The recovery of persons at the center of our work is especially vital now because of the sea change in our culture. I have come to believe in the importance of this work for our future out of a particular worldview that the universe is essentially personal. Though not a popular view, especially in academia for the past century, it is a hypothesis worth considering. I can find no other ground on which to build a principle-centered work community, a college worthy of the mission to educate and to serve.

At Your Institution Discussion Points

- In what ways does your college inadvertently convey to students that they are numbers?
- Do you see signs of institutional alienation among your students? What are they?
- Are there programs and places in the college that have excelled in creating a powerful sense of personal community? What are their results, and what lessons can be transferred elsewhere in the college?

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Cultural Diversity: Symbolism or Inclusion?

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In most pluralistic societies, there is growing emphasis on how to effectively teach students of varying backgrounds. In the United States, increased immigration, a rapidly developing global economy, and civil rights have created enormous demands to educate students in an increasingly dynamic society.

Significant differences in language, social class, and educational and cultural values require flexible and creative administrative structures and teaching strategies. In addition, the demographics of most community college communities are changing rapidly. Community colleges, which have a broad mandate to prepare students for higher education degrees, professional careers, and vocations, have addressed this challenge in many ways. There is no one approach or right way. As Ruth Simmons, president of Brown University said, "Nobody has found a way to get diversity right. It's something you just continue to struggle with."

The first requirement for all community colleges is to know their student populations and the communities from which they come.

The first requirement for all community colleges is to know their student populations and the communities from which they come. The second requirement is that college personnel must be able to translate that knowledge into many worldviews with the goal of educating students to live in a rapidly changing, diverse society.

How does this stretch the mission of your community college? What is being done on your campus to help students and college personnel learn about other cultures, ethnicities, and social groups? What is being done to help your students learn how to create effective, diverse communities that capitalize on the benefits and resolve the inevitable conflicts?

Recognition of Campus Diversity

Most colleges, in an effort to introduce students to various cultures and ethnic groups, hold various forms of international or ethnic days that focus on the food, music, traditions, and typical clothing of different nationalities. This is a common initial approach to celebrating diversity, and it is a good beginning. These visible cultural differences, however, are only a small part of the diversity issue. Below the surface lie differences in perception, communication style, values, attitudes, and experiences that are the source of the strengths and the problems that exist in pluralistic societies.

How does your college address these issues? On many campuses there are faculty and staff who believe that, if there are no overt conflicts or problems associated with a particular group on their campus, diversity is working well. They may be right, but who are they asking, and what

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questions are they asking? What is being done with the information? And to what ends? How a college answers these questions will define whether cultural diversity is addressed in a symbolic or a truly inclusive manner.

In your institution, is the primary measurement the absence of overt conflict? Or are the quantitative analysis of entrance and dropout data, exit rates, and grade statistics being considered? Are specific student groups asked their opinions about the kinds of assistance that would help them? How is this information incorporated into classroom and academic service delivery? Are there programs to assist different types of students, including programs that address both the academic and social needs of these students?

Approaches to Inclusion

Faculty and Staff Programs. One of the first places to observe your college's approach to inclusion is in the training given to frontline personnel: the service center staff who provide students with an ongoing, important experience of your campus climate. Student employees can be key in this function since they assume a dual role – that of student employees and peers. Is the service center staff trained to be customer oriented? Do they understand how to deal effectively with people of different cultural backgrounds and language skills?

Some faculty training on our campus focuses on personal contact with students, many of whom have never experienced this type of teacher-student interaction.

Just as culture influences how we live and work, it also influences how we teach and learn. In our college we have workshops for faculty, staff, and administrators on subjects such as effective teaching and interaction with students of various cultural and ethnic groups, the processes of cultural adjustment, and the reduction of prejudice in the classroom.

Some faculty training on our campus focuses on personal contact with students, many of whom have never experienced this type of teacher-student interaction. Often immigrant students and their families are shocked and gratified when teachers invite them to visit their offices, or when a teacher calls the student at home to offer assistance. Students tell how this inspires and encourages them to continue.

We conduct trips for college personnel to the ethnic communities of our students as well as to the Museum of Tolerance and other institutions that focus on understanding the cultural diversity in our region. We have had student, faculty, staff, and administrator task forces that focused on the needs of specific student cultural groups. At another college, intergroup conflict resolution training is offered to student leaders of the college's various ethnic student associations. Other colleges have instituted intercultural peer and college personnel-student mentoring programs.

Student Programs. Students with language limitations, or those from significantly different cultural backgrounds, need extra assistance to negotiate their way through the vast range of requirements and opportunities at most community colleges. To be successful, they must develop skills that will enable them to adapt to an extremely different teaching and learning system.

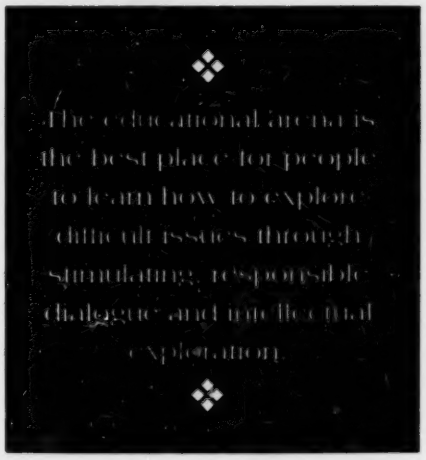
We must also recognize that U.S.-born students of European American origin, the dominant culture in the United States, need assistance in their growth in adjusting to a more diverse society.

At our college, which has a large immigrant population, we have classes for immigrant students that teach them how to function effectively in the U.S. culture and classroom. We also teach them how to do American-style networking. We invite representatives from various support offices to explain how and why students should access their services, recognizing that there is so much entry information, it is often difficult for them to remember it all.

Inclusion requires, however, more than teaching students from other countries and cultures to function successfully in the U.S. culture. We must also recognize that U.S.-born students of European-American heritage, the dominant culture in the United States, need assistance and support in adjusting to a more diverse society. To develop skills to live and work effectively with people from other cultures and U.S. ethnic groups, they must first understand their own culture. Consequently, in one of our transfer classes, U.S.-born and foreign students work together to explore their own and each others' cultures, as well as develop skills useful in intercultural settings. Students also need support in understanding the benefits and problems of a diverse culture and how to adjust effectively to a rapidly changing workplace and society. In another class we explore issues of prejudice and discrimination locally, nationally, and internationally, and discover ways to create inclusion.

Public Forums. Another important way colleges can support inclusion is to conduct open forums in response to national and international events. Does your college offer well-advertised presentations on topical local, national, and international issues related to problems and opportunities of diversity? Are these presentations easily accessible to all students, faculty, and staff? For example, following the events of September 11, did your college schedule public forums, presentations, and faculty training sessions to help people understand the variety of issues and dilemmas associated with religious beliefs, with terrorism of all forms, and with the consequences of prejudice and discrimination?

Does your college have knowledge of local experts on various issues? Are there faculty, staff, and students who could contribute to these presentations? Do administrators play an active, visible role to demonstrate institutional support? Is the information from these sessions provided in campus publications for those who did not attend? Are there opportunities for ongoing discussion?


The educational arena is the best place for people to learn how to explore difficult issues through stimulating, responsible dialogue and intellectual exploration.

Some colleges are reluctant to publicly address controversial issues for fear that problems will be created. The educational arena is the best place for people to learn how to explore difficult issues through stimulating, responsible dialogue and intellectual exploration. Recently, one U.S. community college participated in a Japanese television dialogue presenting U.S. and foreign-born student voices in response to the terrorist attack, the U.S. response, and the war in Afghanistan. It was a rare opportunity for students to listen to other students of different backgrounds, cultures, worldviews, and histories.

These questions and ideas are only a beginning to examine how your college is defining and responding to cultural diversity and inclusion. Colleges across the country are developing many approaches. The challenge for us is to determine how we, and our students, can contribute to an effective, pluralistic, rapidly changing society.

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At Your Institution Discussion Points

- What parameters are being used to determine if students of a variety of backgrounds are getting what they need both in the classroom and from institutional services?
- Who is seeking the information, and with whom is it shared? What methods of communication are being used to gather and distribute the information?
- What changes in institutional structures and educational delivery result?
- Is there ongoing review of short- and long-term efforts to create and support true inclusion?

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Professional Development for a New Age

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More than at any other time in their history, community colleges need to plan and provide comprehensive ongoing professional development programs for their faculty and staff. Faced with an increasingly diverse student body with varying expectations, learning styles, and service preferences; new and growing competition; technological advancements; and changing governmental policies and societal demands, community colleges can no longer respond in traditional ways. Community college employees, across all levels, require a new way of thinking and a new set of skills to succeed. Higher education's graying workforce magnifies this problem, as do traditional training programs for college faculty and administrators that have not kept pace with this changing environment.

Not all challenges that community colleges face today are new; however, they are increasingly complex and include:

- A growing emphasis on student learning as the outcome of quality teaching
- The impact of a global economy and the need for a greater awareness of international perspectives in courses
- A demand from employers and students for more relevant curriculum and a set of general transferable skills upon graduation
- The need for more inter-institutional collaboration with both public and private sectors
- The impact of technology on the delivery of instruction
- The demand by a growing proportion of students for learning options such as e-learning, face to face, hybrid, accelerated, credit for life experience, directed study, and e-service and business options such as 24/7 Web registration, library access, tutoring, bookstore, and advising services.

In today's rapidly changing environment, community colleges often must face all or many of these challenges at the same time, and with the same personnel and skill sets of the past.

Every new challenge brings new opportunities, especially for those community colleges that have a workforce capable of thinking comprehensively and creatively. Often this thinking results in overhauling the procedural, curricular, technical, and operational functions of a college, affecting the way it operates in the short and long term. These changes often require new skills that the current workforce may not have.

Every new challenge brings new opportunities, especially for those community colleges that have a workforce capable of thinking comprehensively and creatively

Once the community college leader has a firm understanding of the new skill sets required to change the way the organization operates, there are three

The primary goal of professional development is to expand individuals' knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitude or behavior with a clear focus on achieving the goals of the institution.

alternative courses of action to consider: hiring new or additional employees with the new skill sets required; forsaking the new direction or vision in keeping with the skills and abilities of the current workforce; or training the current workforce with the new skills they require. Often, retraining the current workforce is the most desirable alternative, and to do so effectively, a focused professional development program is implemented.

The primary goal of professional development is to expand individuals' knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitude or behavior with a clear focus on achieving the goals of the institution. Thomas R. Guskey (1997) has identified four common professional development elements that have produced demonstrable results. While systematically interconnected, these principles are clear, consistent, and applicable to professional development efforts throughout the institution.

Have a clear focus on learning and learners. Focusing on the needs of the student learner allows the professional development effort to take an outside-in approach to questioning assumptions and mental models. This process utilizes data analysis to determine the professional skills, pedagogical strategies, curriculum, and assistance required to meet student needs and improve learning and services.

These incremental changes must be guided by a grand vision that extends beyond the walls of classrooms or barriers of titles and job descriptions.

Focus on both individual and organizational change. Colleges will only improve when learning is a systemwide practice for all employees. Collaborative efforts with faculty, administrators and support staff, along with an analysis and modification of current organizational systems, are critical for success.

All employees must ensure that their skills in information technology, customer and student sensitivity, cost/benefit analysis, and flexible working practices meet the needs of the students, clients, and constituents they serve.

Make small changes guided by a grand vision. In *Schools That Learn*, Senge wrote, "Behind each pattern of behavior is a systemic structure – a set of seemingly unrelated factors that interact, even though they may be widely separated in time and place and even though their relationship may be difficult to recognize. When studied these structures reveal the points of greatest leverage: the places where the least amount of effort provides the greatest influence of change." Small, well-focused professional development actions can produce significant, enduring changes if they are implemented in the right place, with the right people, and at the right time. These incremental changes must be guided by a grand vision that extends beyond the walls of classrooms or barriers of titles and job descriptions. Although the change involved is dynamic and large scale, in practice it is implemented in a series of targeted, skillfully taught smaller steps. (Gephart, 1995)

Provide ongoing professional development that is procedurally embedded. Professional development is not an event, a once a year happening. Results-based professional development is integrated into an individual's ongoing job expectations and linked to the expected performance of the position, department, unit, or college. It is an indispensable expectation for all employees. The college administrator, for example, may enhance the leadership,

communication, and persuasive skills that are critical in convincing colleagues of the need for changing long-established habits. Faculty members may learn new strategies in the process of developing and evaluating curriculum, instructional delivery systems, pedagogy, student learning, and assessment. All employees, regardless of title or position, must ensure that their skills in information technology, customer and student sensitivity, cost-benefit analysis, and flexible working practices are at the level necessary to meet the needs of the students, clients, and constituents they serve.

The National Staff Development Center (2001) has recommended six process standards to ensure the effectiveness of professional development on student learning and organizational change. These processes should be incorporated throughout the planning, delivery, and evaluation phases of professional development programs.

Data driven. Effective professional development programs rely on the collection and utilization of relevant institutional and externally derived data. This is the first and primary element of the process. A gap analysis is then used to determine organizational learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.

Evaluation. Defining measurable learning outcomes for the participants, as well as measuring the success of the professional development process itself, will guide improvement and demonstrate the impact of a professional development program.

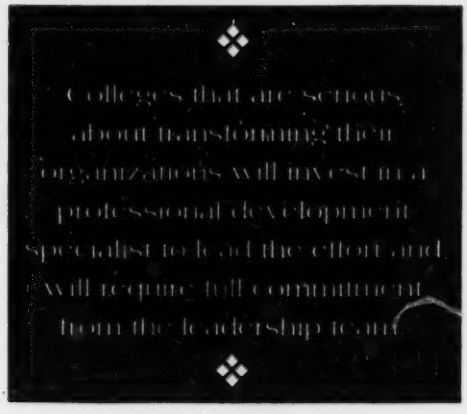
Research-Based. Effective professional development programs prepare college administrators, faculty, and staff to use research for decision making.

Design. The design of the professional development program should be appropriate for the intended goal and audience. It is important to integrate the learning preferences in the delivery of the professional development experience. Opportunities may be provided onsite or online using a variety of delivery approaches.

Learning. Applying the principles of human learning and change play an integral part in the development of effective professional development experiences and programs.

Collaboration. The professional development program provides staff at all levels with the knowledge, skills, and opportunity to collaborate. This collaboration is the ultimate goal since it enhances ongoing learning and decision-making and provides a support system for the new skill sets acquired.

Professional development programs that employ sound practices and processes are predictably more effective. Anderson and Odden (1986) found a reciprocal relationship between organizational success and professional development. They reported that, "when instructional strategies which aim to improve the skills of individuals were successful, they had significant effects on schools as organizations. When school strategies which aim to improve schools as organizations were successful, they had significant impact on individuals." Designing focused, planned, and effectively delivered professional development programs can provide community colleges with a skilled workforce able to think and deliver learning options and services in a new way.


Colleges that are serious about transforming their organizations will invest in a professional development specialist to lead the effort and will require full commitment from the leadership team.

Many institutions think that almost anyone within the institution can lead this initiative, and that is a mistake. Colleges that are serious

about transforming their organizations will invest in a professional development specialist to lead the effort and will require full commitment from the leadership team. A focused, results-based professional development program is well worth the investment and is essential to successfully achieving the community college mission.

At Your Institution Discussion Points

- How can community college leaders promote a culture where professional development is seen as essential and is welcomed?
- What are the goals of your community college, and what are the core competencies required by the administrative, faculty, and support staff to achieve these goals successfully?
- How much should community colleges invest in professional development, and how can the cost-benefit of such an endeavor be determined?

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Effecting a Successful Transition of Leadership

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Changing of the Guard

An aging academy is contributing to a significant turnover of institutional leadership. In a 1998 study by the UCLA Higher Education Research Institution, 32 percent of all faculty were found to be at least 55 years of age (Arden, 2001). A 1999 study by the National Center for Educational Statistics found 52 percent of full-time faculty members age 55 to 64 plan to retire by 2004. The problem of leadership turnover is not limited to faculty, however; a 2001 American Association of Community Colleges online survey found 45 percent of the responding presidents plan to retire by 2007. (Shults, 2001)

Professional advancement opportunities and higher salaries from other organizations further contribute to the leadership exodus. In some cases, leaders move between colleges to accept higher levels of responsibility. As the number of leadership vacancies increases, more inter-institutional movement of personnel is expected. Higher salaries for comparable responsibilities in the private sector and K-12 schools exacerbate the difficulty in attracting and retaining successful administrators, faculty experts, and skilled staff. (Yates, 2001)

> Colleges must also ensure that those selected for leadership positions exhibit a high degree of candidate-to-institution fit to benefit both the leader and the institution.

Whether from retirements or competition, community colleges face a major staffing challenge as experienced presidents, senior administrators, and faculty leaders leave in significant numbers. To ensure institutional stability and vitality, the resulting vacancies must be filled thoughtfully and strategically.

The Task at Hand

Attracting replacements for institutional leaders is a formidable task. The issue, however, is not simply one of recruitment. Colleges must also ensure that those selected for leadership positions exhibit a high degree of *candidate-to-institution* fit to benefit both the leader and the institution. Appropriate fit involves an alignment of a candidate's values, attitudes, and attributes with the values and culture of the institution as well as with the increasingly complex, contextual, and interrelated knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success in the position (Baker, 2000).

Characteristics of effective leadership typically include not only traditional *hard* credentials such as relevant knowledge, education, and experience, but also *soft* credentials such as effective communication, collaboration, tolerance for ambiguity, understanding diversity, diplomacy and civility, inclusion, sense of humor, integrity, vision development, and strategic planning (Shults, 2001). But, how are these attributes evaluated? Is the evaluation based on interviewer perceptions and third-party comments, or is it based on primary data-driven evidence?

Evaluating Fit

Few people fail in leadership positions because they lack the hard credentials required for the job. More commonly they fail because their soft credentials lack substantial congruence with institutional values and culture or the attitudes, skills, and abilities necessary for success (Baker, 2006). While conventional hiring processes use primary evidence to assess a candidate's hard skills, they use secondary evidence to assess soft qualifications. Typically, secondary evidence consists of a candidate's self-assessment or brief observations of the candidate during the selection process.

Without clear identification of necessary hard and soft qualifications and primary evidence that enables a comprehensive assessment of fit, institutions and candidates may be engaged in wishful rather than effective hiring.

Candidates often testify to the strength and effectiveness of their soft credentials, but have little opportunity to exhibit them. This inability to explicitly demonstrate – and for institutional representatives to assess and evaluate – the authenticity of a candidate's credentials is of concern. It can lead to an ineffective assessment of candidate-job-institution fit. At best, a lack of congruence may result in lingering frustration, dissatisfaction, and underperformance. At worst, it may result in a perpetual revolving door with leaders continuously coming and going as they enter and leave the institution.

Faced with strong competition for a limited pool of well-qualified candidates, community colleges often present themselves in the best possible light to attract desirable applicants. In doing so, position announcements may list desired qualities that suggest an ideal institutional environment rather than portray organizational reality. As with applicants who attempt to detect and reflect what institutions want, institutions may attempt to detect and reflect institutional environments, cultures, and professional opportunities that future leaders want. If the interests and characteristics of both the candidate and the institution are not authentic, a resulting institution-leader relationship may be more superficial than substantive.

Therefore, congruence between institutional reality, hard and soft qualifications, and evaluation of a candidate's hard and soft qualifications has significant implications for hiring. In short, in an environment of political correctness with the "right" institutional characteristics, required candidate qualifications, and interview questions and answers, how does the organization authentically evaluate overall candidate-job-institution fit? Without clear identification of necessary hard and soft qualifications and primary evidence that enables a comprehensive assessment of fit, institutions and candidates may be engaged in wishful rather than effective hiring.

Addressing the Challenge

Many community colleges are responding to the increasing number of retirements and the shrinking pool of fully qualified candidates by filling full-time faculty positions with part-time faculty or by hiring faculty on temporary contracts (Burnett, 2001). This trend extends to nonfaculty positions as well. It is not uncommon for administrative leadership vacancies to be filled on a temporary basis by retired leaders, administrators on loan from other institutions, or administrators who specialize in short-term assignments. While avoiding an immediate problem, these approaches are stopgap measures at best and may negatively impact institutional stability by delaying the inevitable problem of replacing institutional leaders on a permanent basis. Institutions must address the hiring challenge more proactively by revisiting their hiring philosophy and practices.

The development of a realistic job description with clearly defined knowledge, skills, and abilities is critical to the success of a proactive hiring strategy. However, a meaningful job description with clear definition of requisite attributes will not by itself ensure a successful hiring outcome. It must be supported by relevant data to assess applicant attributes required for the position and for the institution.

Outcomes-Based Hiring

Institutions can enhance the effectiveness of their leadership replacement strategies by implementing an outcomes-based hiring model. This model begins with a clearly defined hiring outcome that includes criteria for fit between candidate, job, and institution. Screening practices are then developed to provide evidence of a candidate's fit with the intended outcome. This comprehensive outcomes-based model forces the institution to look holistically at an evaluation of all required qualifications and characteristics.

The following sequence of interrelated questions is designed to help guide the hiring process:

- What are the essential duties and responsibilities of the position?
- What are the institutional and job-specific environments and contexts for those duties and responsibilities?
- What knowledge, skills, and abilities support success in those environments and contexts?
- How can candidates authentically exhibit required soft qualifications?
- How will the institution assess and evaluate required soft qualifications?

Institutions can enhance the effectiveness of their leadership replacement strategies by implementing an outcomes-based hiring model

The first three questions form the foundation and context that foster a determination of relevant and meaningful knowledge, skills, and abilities for the position. The fourth question guides the development of related screening and assessment activities. The fifth question fosters the development of criteria against which candidates will be judged. Collectively these five questions help to establish a clear, holistic assessment of candidate-job-institution congruence by focusing on the ultimate hiring outcome: an effective leader who possesses not only the requisite knowledge, background, and experience but also has authentically exhibited the necessary attitudes, skills, and abilities identified as necessary for success in the position. (Baker, 2000)

Implications

Hiring decisions have obvious implications both for institutions and for candidates. A flawed choice by the institution may contribute to unsatisfactory performance, dysfunctional operations, or institutional instability. A poor choice by a candidate may hinder success, foster dissatisfaction, or impede future career growth. It is important, therefore, that candidates as well as institutions attend closely to an evaluation of authentic candidate-job-institution fit. Hiring a candidate for the sake of filling a leadership position, or accepting a leadership position based solely on prestige or salary, is not the answer. These actions may have unintended consequences, provide only short-term benefits, and threaten long-term stability. The use of primary data to evaluate overall fit during the hiring process may help ensure sustainable positive benefits for both the institution and the leader.

Hiring a candidate for the sake of filling a leadership position, or accepting a leadership position based solely on prestige or salary, is not the answer

At Your Institution Discussion Points

- How is candidate-job-institution fit determined when filling leadership vacancies?
- What is the correlation between required qualifications and job-specific realities?
- What evidence is most meaningful in evaluating hard and soft qualifications?

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What the Experts Say: Leadership in Times of Uncertainty

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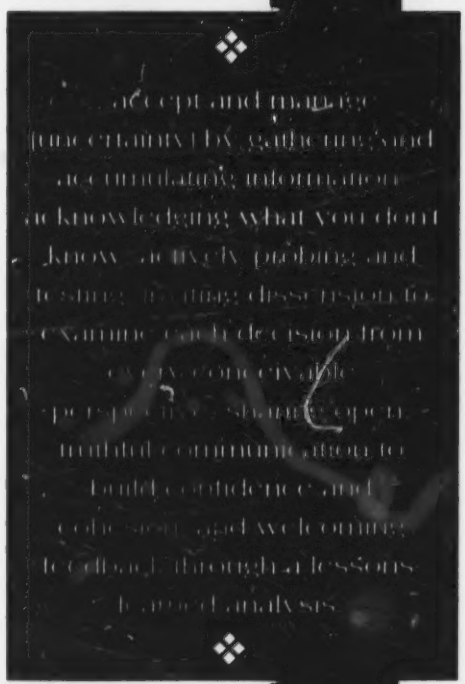
Certainty in knowing where to lead an organization in today's increasingly uncertain environment is wishful thinking, or so it seems. In the search for certainty, however, it makes sense to focus on how to lead instead of where to lead. A brief review of the current thinking regarding leadership attributes, skills, and strategies gives leaders insight into how to advance the community college movement during this period of unparalleled uncertainty.

Enduring Attributes

Attributes are enduring; skills are adaptable. In *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap ... and Others Don't*, Collins (2001) suggests that while the specific application of skills will change, certain immutable laws of organized human performance will endure. These attributes, displayed by leaders who reach the top of a five-level hierarchy of capabilities, include ambition for the company before ambition for self, a fanatical drive to produce sustained results, and the resolve to make the company great regardless of the size and difficulty of decisions. These "Level 5" leaders embody a paradoxical mix of personal humility and professional will, attributes that have endured regardless of the times. (For more information about leadership attributes see Hesselbein, Goldsmith, and Beckhard).



Adaptable Skills

Although effective leadership skills have remained relatively constant over time, applying them in uncertain times may require differing strategies. In *The Absolutes of Leadership*, Crosby (1997) offers a simple method for assessing one's own leadership skills as well as the leadership skills of others. Leaders, he says, come in five versions: destructor, procrastinator, caretaker, preparer, and accomplisher. Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) in *Shared Vision* suggest that transformational leaders "possess the synergy to create something new out of something old" (p. 32). These leaders craft a new vision and get others to see it, understand it, and fully commit to it. (For more information about leadership skills see Segil, and Vaughan and Weisman).

Situational Strategies

When situations change, the ability for leaders to react quickly and flexibly becomes critical. In *Winning Decisions: Getting It Right the First Time*, Russo and Schoemaker (2001) offer a strategy

for making smart decisions in uncertain times. The strategy is not designed to eliminate uncertainty, but to accept and manage it by gathering and accumulating information; acknowledging what you don't know; actively probing and testing; inviting dissension to examine each decision from every conceivable perspective; sharing open, truthful communication to build confidence and cohesion; and welcoming feedback through a lessons-learned analysis. (For more information about situational leadership see Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson).

By design, community colleges are intended to mirror the communities that create them. Data show that during the past two decades, communities across the country are becoming increasingly dissimilar demographically, economically, politically, and culturally (Lorenzo & DeMarte, 2002). Therefore, colleges need leaders who embody enduring attributes, who can adapt their skills to fit the current reality, and who can develop and implement responsive strategies tailored to meet the specific situation on their campuses.

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What the Experts Say: Revisioning Roles and Responsibilities

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Renewal

Many community colleges are embarking upon a renewal process. They are realigning policies with intended outcomes, reviewing systems to create a more learner-centered organization, and eliminating unnecessary procedures.

ReVisioning Roles

"Structural, systemic and cultural change – all a part of transformation – force a critical reexamination and redefinition of the roles played by faculty and staff in our institutions" (Alfred & Carter, *Breaking Out of the Box*, p. 9). Most college staff are role-bound by established job descriptions and traditional expectations. What if these expectations were tossed out and the roles of staff redesigned to meet the needs of learning in a culture that placed learning first? (O'Banion, 1997)

What impact will revisioning roles have on our colleges? According to Dolence and Norris (1995) in *Transforming Higher Education: A Vision for Learning in the 21st Century*, "the redefinition of roles has the potential to reap substantial increases in the productivity of all participants in the learning process" (p.60). In *Making Change Happen* Carter and Alfred (1999) state that "perhaps the biggest challenge facing colleges, and simultaneously, one of our best opportunities to shape the future, lies in developing a human resource plan that addresses the future needs of the institution" (p.34). While the constraints are daunting, there is a tremendous window of opportunity because of anticipated retirements.

Human Resource Development

The Consortium for Community College Development identified five critical issues related to human resources:

- Encouraging faculty and staff thinking about new ways of delivering programs and services
- Identifying and responding to changing professional development needs of faculty and staff
- Identifying new skills needed to lead and manage transformed institutions
- Redefining faculty, administrative, and staff roles to incorporate new responsibilities
- Designing a comprehensive human resources plan that helps achieve a new vision (Carter & Alfred, 1999, p. 5).

Carter and Alfred, in *Reaching for The Future*, assert that redefining roles would be to "define *core* staff needs and explore contractual relationships for *noncore functions*" (p.15). They suggest "core members would need to be team-oriented, multiskilled, and capable of functioning both as specialists and generalists. Establishing this core would involve a different approach to recruitment, orientation, and development. A comprehensive, prehiring orientation would delineate college values...and clearly communicate expectations for continuous improvement and flexibility.... Compensation and reward systems would be based on knowledge, skills, and explicit performance outcomes" (p. 21).

Success Skills for Learning College Employees

Dolence and Norris (1995) identify new faculty roles as those of synthesizer, mentor, evaluator, certifier of mastery, architect, navigator, and researcher. New administrator roles are general contractor, developer, systems operator, and auditor. *New Designs for the Two-Year Institution of Higher Education: Final Report* (Copa & Ammentorp, 1998) contains a comprehensive list of Design Specifications for Learning Staff that includes items such as "ensures that each learner is known and served very well," "handles just-in-time learning design," "builds learning communities," "operates as information navigator," and "continues to learn." Stephen Covey (1990) suggests that we should hire staff based on their attitudes even though some skill training may be needed. In *Fish! A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results*, Paul (2000) offers four recommendations:

- Recruit and retain talented employees who prefer to work where success and fun are part of the culture.
- Create a positive, high-energy environment where team members coach each other honestly and respectfully.
- Delight customers who enjoy doing business with upbeat, fully present, and energetic people.
- Inspire accountable employees who help their organization reach its goals and live its vision.

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The Evolving Community College: The Multiple Mission Debate

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Community colleges have unique strengths that serve as their hallmark. Demographic and technological development, the growing importance of nontraditional pathways through college, commitment to access and open admission, and the constant and continuous search for new markets and students have caused community colleges to develop their potential and expand their horizons.

Over the course of a year, community colleges enroll more than half of all of the nation's undergraduate students. The open doors at these institutions have democratized American higher education and have provided a host of opportunities to a new class of learners. Moreover, the types of students who enroll in community colleges are of great interest to scholars and public policymakers. For example, minorities and immigrants are overrepresented in two-year schools, as are first-generation college students and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

The historic mission of the community college has been to satisfy the needs of the community that gave it life, and as its community evolved, expectations increased. This, in turn, has led to most community colleges becoming institutions with multiple missions, each directed at addressing the specific needs of varying constituencies. The programs of many community colleges are broad in scope and now often include adult basic education, developmental education, career education, transfer to baccalaureate programs, customized training for business, preparation for industry certification, small business development activities, economic forecasting, as well as a wide array of credit-free courses.

After several decades of growth, community colleges are now faced with a particularly challenging environment. To maintain their viability, they must respond to changes in demographic trends; conflicting expectations of students, parents, and policymakers; unstable state funding policy; and changes in pedagogic technology. Community colleges are also being threatened by new types of educational providers, potentially altering their role within the wide landscape of higher education and lifelong learning.

Community colleges are also being threatened by new types of educational providers, potentially altering their role within the wide landscape of higher education and lifelong learning.

Although most community colleges have embraced the comprehensive strategy of focusing on a multitude of needs within a community, there are those who have been criticizing this approach for many years. Many believe that the primary function of the community college should be to prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions, where they ultimately earn a baccalaureate degree (Eaton, 1994; Brint & Karabel, 1989). These critics have been vocal opponents of the broader strategy. They argue

that the growing emphasis on occupational education has a negative effect on transfer rates. Vocationalism, they argue, demoralizes the academic programs that encourage transfer (Dougherty, 1994).

By emphasizing career education, some believe that students are drawn away from the programs that encourage transfer. Brint and Karabel (1989) suggest this approach altered the community college mission and turned these organizations into job preparation schools for low and middle class occupations, thus limiting students' opportunities for advancement. They contend that an institution established to "level up" disadvantaged segments of society has, in reality, leveled down the critical literacy skills required for degree programs. As community colleges broadened their strategies to meet local employment demands, the earlier emphasis on liberal and transfer education appears to have taken a back seat to the newer, more pragmatic purposes. Thus, the vocational mission "eclipsed" the emphasis on transfer and liberal education (Wechsler, 1968; Katsinas, 1994).

...the earlier emphasis on liberal and transfer education appears to have taken a back seat to the newer, more pragmatic purposes.

While some critics object to weakening the academic transfer function by expanding the career preparation mission of the community college, others feel strongly that vocational education should now be identified as the new core function of community colleges (Blocker, Plummer, & Richardson, 1965; Grubb, 1996). Moreover, a growing number of policymakers and business leaders see career education in community colleges as a central component of building a modern workforce (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, May, 1998). It is considered by some as the most distinctive niche of community colleges within the higher education system (Leitzel & Clowes, 1991).

According to Grubb, community colleges are not well served by the continued criticism of the vocational function and a strong emphasis on transfer and academics. "One implication for community colleges is that they need to take their broadly defined occupational purposes more seriously....They are not academic institutions...even when many of their students hope to transfer to four-year colleges" (Grubb, 1996, p. 83). He argues that: (1) the emphasis on academic education implies that there is only one valued postsecondary institution, defined by the research university; (2) community colleges cannot win the academic battle because they are not selective; and (3) community colleges often fail to achieve large transfer numbers, therefore their clientele is left with outcomes of uncertain academic value. Clowes and Levine (1989) argue that career education is the only viable core function for most community colleges.

Others opposed to the comprehensive strategy have a more general concern. As Pat Cross asked, "Can any college perform all of those functions with excellence – or even adequately in today's climate of scarce resources and heavy competition for students?" (Cross, 1985, p. 35). Breneman and Nelson (1980) made a similar argument after predicting growing fiscal pressures on the colleges, stating that the "most fundamental choice facing community colleges is whether to

emphasize the community-based learning center concept, with an emphasis on adult and continuing education and community services, or to emphasize transfer programs, sacrificing elsewhere if necessary....It may no longer be possible to have it both ways" (p. 114). These critics suggest that colleges must choose to focus on a smaller set of functions; that by trying to take on too many activities, the quality of each function suffers (Bailey & Averianova, 1998).

Political and fiscal forces, as well as a commitment to serving the varied needs of their communities, inexorably push colleges to acquire more functions.

It is not surprising that most community colleges continue to move toward a more comprehensive strategy. Political and fiscal forces, as well as a commitment to serving the varied needs of their communities, inexorably push colleges to acquire more functions. Shedding programs may risk losing enrollments and political support in favor of an abstract goal of focused organizational efficiency. This strategy may appear reasonable, but remains unmeasured (Bailey, 2002; Bailey & Morest, forthcoming).

Thus, regardless of which combination of functions is the best or most efficient, it is likely that community colleges will continue to take on more activities. Perhaps the most reasonable resolution to the ongoing mission debate is to recognize that colleges will continue to evolve into even more complex institutions serving a diverse set of constituencies and carrying out a large variety of activities. But within this context, it is wise to develop policies that will guarantee that community colleges coordinate their functions and ensure the missions they do undertake complement each other, as well as the needs of the communities they serve.

Perhaps the most reasonable resolution to the ongoing mission debate is to recognize that colleges will continue to evolve into even more complex institutions serving a diverse set of constituencies and carrying out a large variety of activities.

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Community Colleges in the Public Policy Arena

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A hallmark of our nascent 21st century is the rapid pace of societal change and the increase in knowledge and information. American two-year colleges are uniquely positioned to play an integral role in helping our communities adapt to and benefit from the information age. Strong community colleges, almost by definition, reflect their local environment – the demographics, economics, and culture of their communities. In an age of increasing competition and change, it is this close integration with the local community that will prove to be the greatest strength for flourishing colleges.

However, as two-year colleges begin their second century, they will continue to wrestle with many of the same difficult questions they've struggled with for their first 100 years, including securing adequate funding, meeting the need for public accountability, and identifying the community college role as part of a seamless educational system.

Funding and Accountability Issues

By their very nature, community colleges are creations of public policy with the balance of power between local and state entities creating differing governance and funding patterns. Historically, there have been significant shifts in the sources of financial support for community colleges. Early in the 20th century local funds made up 94 percent of junior college support, with the remaining 6 percent provided by tuition and fees (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). In the 1990s, local support to community colleges dropped to 18 percent, while state support increased to 46 percent and student tuition and fees covered 20 percent.

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While colleges in 26 states still collect support from a local tax base, the trend has been for states to assume an increasing percentage of community college operating costs (ECS, 2000). This trend has been driven by property tax limitation efforts as well as concerns over significant variations in the ability of small communities to support local colleges. Dramatic differences in property tax valuations across a state can lead to large disparities in tuition rates between wealthier communities and poorer districts; poorer districts may be forced to raise tuition to meet their basic budgets.

This change in funding has resulted in a policy shift regarding community colleges at the state level. One of the most common state policy trends is the growing demand from state officials for colleges to be more responsive. Many state policymakers are no longer satisfied with providing incremental funding increases or using enrollment-driven formulas that are not linked to

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outcomes. As a result, 27 states require colleges to report their performance on specific indicators, and 10 states actually link performance on these indicators to budget allocations (ECS, 2000).

While there will be less attention from lawmakers on performance funding over the short term in light of the current economic downturn and resulting budget cuts, issues related to accountability will not go away and will re-emerge in the future. So what can we do?

Community colleges will be well served to continue developing the capacity to measure not only how much students know when they enter the college classroom, but what students know and can demonstrate when they complete their education. Community colleges have long argued they have made significant contributions by adding value to students' lives. The more this contribution can be measured through demonstration of actual competencies, good student outcomes data, and economic impact measures, the stronger the argument for continued public support becomes.

K-16 Policies and Lifelong Learning

Education scholars suggest that the United States has the most disconnected education pipeline in the world. Primarily because of our traditional emphasis on local support of education, high schools, two-year colleges, and universities have each developed their own standards and requirements for admissions and graduation, usually with little consultation with the receiving institution. Because of separate governance and funding systems between K-12, two-year, and four-year colleges and universities, it has been difficult to hold the educational system as a whole responsible for learning that crosses institutions.

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The lack of connection between secondary and postsecondary systems often prevents students from using their senior year for college preparation. Instead, many high school seniors take easy classes, cut corners, or work long hours at after-school jobs. National statistics indicate that 30 percent of freshmen require at least one remedial course (NCES, 1996). Other estimates suggest that 50 percent of entering high school graduates do not meet placement-exam standards at the community college level and should not be enrolled in college credit courses. At the very time when Department of Labor statistics suggest that 80 percent or more of all jobs will require at least some postsecondary education, the national high school graduation rate for 1998 was only 74 percent. The lack of accountability, unnecessary duplication of effort, and artificial barriers created by separate requirements have led policymakers to mandate initiatives that streamline the educational pipeline and ensure student preparedness.

Community colleges are encouraged to offer postsecondary enrollment options to high school students. Dual enrollment options allow high school students the opportunity to begin their college careers by enrolling in challenging courses that allow them to earn college credits upon admittance to a postsecondary institution. Some policymakers are advocating that state education officials consider radical approaches that would eliminate the senior year altogether and move responsibility for grade 12 to community colleges.

Policy options such as statewide general education requirements or common course numbering are being adopted to provide more seamless postsecondary systems. Issues regarding articulation and transfer of community college courses to four-year colleges and universities will continue to be a high priority of elected officials as they consider different solutions to ease the transition

Community colleges that place a high priority on responding to local and state needs in an entrepreneurial fashion will be seen by elected policymakers as part of the solution and will find the support they require.

of students through the system. There is increased emphasis on developing articulation of applied technology degrees with applied baccalaureate programs at four-year colleges and universities.

More two-year colleges will seek approval to provide baccalaureate education whether through university centers located on community college campuses or by granting the degree themselves. Even as communities demand improved access to traditional baccalaureate education, providing support for lifelong learning or continuing education will become an increasingly important educational service at community colleges as changes in technology impact nearly every field of knowledge. Local business and industry will demand expanded customized training services to help their workers upgrade skills and compete in a global economy. With the aging population and an emphasis on improved health and quality of life, there will also be increased interest in providing lifelong access to educational opportunities for all members of our communities.

An Impending Collision of Values

Competing demands on two-year colleges threaten to create a major policy dilemma and cause conflict with the traditional core value of the open door. In the past, there were multiple routes to achieve the American Dream. In today's economy, with the disappearance of low-skill, high-wage manufacturing jobs, virtually the only route to the middle class is through higher education. In the current environment of significant budget cuts, as funding for faculty and staff positions are frozen and course sections limited, students are inevitably going to be turned away. Those most likely to be impacted are at-risk students: new immigrants, nontraditional students, and those least familiar with the ins and outs of college practices and procedures.

Difficult choices will present themselves as we try to balance the educational needs of the burgeoning classes of high school graduates – 2007 will see the largest and most diverse graduating class in the nation's history – with the needs of the poor, displaced workers, working adults, and seniors interested in accessing opportunities for continuing education. In an age of tight public resources, the capacity of community colleges to balance and meet the educational requirements of these disparate groups will be a major challenge.

These Challenges Also Represent Opportunities

Policy challenges confronting community colleges also present innovative opportunities. In an age of increased competition and accountability, maintaining the status quo is not an option. Community colleges that place a high priority on responding to local and state needs in an entrepreneurial fashion will be seen by elected policymakers as part of the solution and will find the support they require. In the not-too-distant future when well-heeled private sector competitors join forces with prestigious universities to offer an online degree, many mediocre institutions will be hard-pressed to compete and may be forced out of business. However, colleges that are

Now is the time for two-year colleges to identify and forge strategic partnerships with those visionary leaders from both the public and private sectors who are creatively seeking to find new solutions to pressing social problems and planning for the future.

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well-connected to their local communities and are meeting vital state and local needs should survive and flourish.

Now is the time for two-year colleges to identify and forge strategic partnerships with those visionary leaders from both the public and private sectors who are creatively seeking to find new solutions to pressing social problems and planning for the future. Community colleges are better positioned than ever before to break free from the limiting paradigms of the past in order to help shape their own destiny and the future of their communities.

At Your Institution Discussion Points

- Does a shift away from local property taxes to state funding undermine a tradition of local control that has been common to community colleges?
- If an educated citizenry is the goal, how can states change policies that encourage greater cooperation and provide incentives to support more seamless transitions between K-12, community colleges, and baccalaureate institutions?
- In light of decreased resources and competing demands for access to community colleges, will it be possible for community colleges to maintain the tradition of the open door?

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Through the Looking Glass: Future Programming

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It is time for a reorientation of our thinking. As community college professionals, we must acknowledge that associate degree attainment is potentially a dated concept; in the time it takes a student to obtain a college credential, the evolving landscape of work has redefined the requisite skill set for success on the job. As much as industry requires a just-in-time response to research and development, manufacturing, and product deployment, community colleges must retool academic programming to meet the changing needs of employers in the communities they serve.

...to adequately face this daunting challenge, colleges must define the competencies required by both the employment marketplace and transfer institutions

To adequately face this daunting challenge, colleges must define the competencies required by both the employment marketplace and transfer institutions (Roueche, Johnson, & Roueche, 1997). First and foremost, students need solid academic preparation that includes current, relevant education and training as well as measurable or certifiable skills and abilities. These qualifications must be aligned with the needs of industry and the specifications of receiving institutions. Students also need a broad general education to expand their horizons, allowing them to become contributing, thinking citizens.

Second, we must help students learn the importance of critical thinking so they can evaluate and challenge the rivers of information flowing through the Internet, the media, and other sources. Learning methodologies should include active classroom experiences that help students examine issues from a variety of perspectives and formulate measured opinions. Students need to develop the ability to analyze what they read, hear, or see based on an understanding of the frameworks or biases that shape the information they encounter.

Helping them see the utility of technology as a productivity tool to enhance effectiveness both in academia and in their careers is of paramount importance

Third, all community college students must walk away with advanced technoliteracy, regardless of their area of study. Helping them see the utility of technology as a productivity tool to enhance effectiveness both in academia and in their careers is of paramount importance. It is difficult to succeed in a society driven by information without the ability to access it.

Finally, faculty and staff must help students develop collaborative teaming competencies, recognizing the varied demographics in the global economy. The importance of soft skills for community college students cannot be

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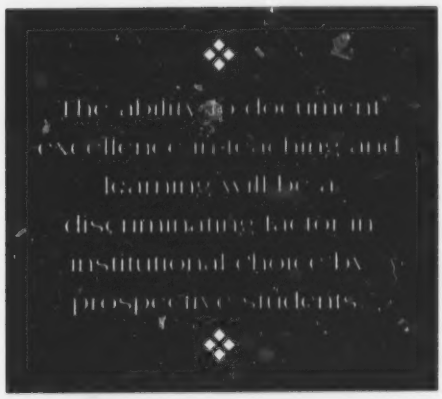
underestimated, including the ability to understand and appreciate the value of diversity in the workplace. By integrating group activities into the educational experience, students can learn how to work effectively with others and contribute fully as team members who share a common goal.

How, then, do we re-engineer today's academic programming to produce the kind of future learning opportunities our students will need?

Transfer education will continue to attract those seeking baccalaureate degrees as long as articulation agreements are fluid. With increasing competition for seats in four-year schools, many students will opt to complete their transfer requirements in their home communities. This is advantageous, as the quality of general education teaching and small class size in community colleges promote success while being extremely cost effective for students. However, if liberal arts courses do not have disciplinary equivalency with transfer institutions, students will hesitate to take them. Career-focused lifelong learners will choose liberal arts courses if they are applicable to their professional development needs. Discussion and dialogue between faculty in liberal arts and career education would help create meaningful curricular bridges. Transfer courses would still offer critical life skills/core competencies with the added bonus of relevance and applicability for the career-oriented student.



The underprepared learner will be a specific and significant mission strand of the community college mandate. Although remedial students currently gravitate toward occupational offerings or the job market (McCabe, 2000), future learners will strive for baccalaureate degrees as an educational goal. Developmental courses will form the preparatory cornerstones for these students, as they work toward challenging college-level offerings. In order to ensure that these learners succeed, we must give them the tools with which to move forward; deficiencies in reading, writing, or numeracy will impede progress and must be addressed with a thoughtful and carefully designed series of academic upgrading courses. Community colleges are, after all, the "dream weavers" (Davis & Wessel, 1998), offering students access to opportunity through the open door.

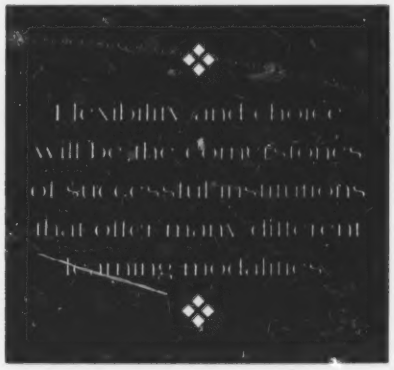
Whenever possible, the community college experience should facilitate the development of soft skills and critical thinking. Although a student may land a job with a particular credential, she will only keep her position if she can solve problems, learn quickly, and work effectively with others. One-way, passive knowledge reception in a classroom will not help students discover and practice the skills required to function productively in the workplace. Structuring learning activities to include opportunities for interaction, collaboration, leadership, and critical thinking will foster and promote the required competencies beyond subject content knowledge.

The identification of curricular outcomes and the processes used to assess them are a starting point for the documentation of valid learning. External examinations and certifications in some workforce development programs have provided employers with obvious, recognizable credentials in determining skills and competencies; community colleges must strive to provide the same level of accountability in all education and training. A graduate's electronic portfolio or academic passport will document what the student can actually do based on the knowledge and skills acquired through course work and practical development. In a handful of colleges, and perhaps in many more in the future, this information can be downloaded to a microchip on an intelligent card or accessed by students through a website, a portable transcript readily available to employers and other institutions of higher learning.

Certification and credential attainment will illustrate the quality and viability of the learning provided by an institution. Courses and programs that have an external validation will be attractive to both students and employers. These qualifications may be industry and technology specific or aligned with the requirements of appropriate professional organizations (Flynn, 2000). Recognized credentials give greater specificity and clarity to the academic work and competencies that students acquire; although associate degrees document program completion, they provide little insight into the identifiable skills and knowledge of a community college graduate. The ability to document excellence in teaching and learning will be a discriminating factor in institutional choice by prospective students.

Community colleges must improve mechanisms for documenting and recognizing prior learning to provide students with the shortest time and distance toward an academic goal. Colleges must develop assessment instruments to gauge what students already know; challenge exams, skill demonstrations, and capstone experience testing are examples of mechanisms that could be used to document student learning. In the postmodern era, knowledge creation is incremental, building on the basis of past experiences. (Light, 2001; Mezirow, 2000) College professionals must identify the missing academic and competency puzzle pieces needed to reach current educational goals and provide students with individualized roadmaps to help them get there as quickly as possible.

Creating a diverse academic menu of learning choices will be critical in attracting and retaining students. Academic consumers will not only choose what they want to learn, but how they want to learn it. Some may opt for online, self-paced, continuous intake and exit programming; others may prefer the on-site classroom experience where they can learn collaboratively with a faculty member and their peers (Knowledge Net, 2000). Institutions with laborious curriculum development and approval processes will be unable to compete in a rapidly changing educational arena. Although the industry mindset is untenable to many academics, the four P's of marketing - product, place, promotion, and price - will determine the colleges that succeed and those that struggle for survival.



Faculty members will become both architects of learning and facilitators of the academic experience. In a growingly competitive educational marketplace, students will vote with their feet as they shop for lifelong learning opportunities. Flexibility and choice will be the cornerstones of successful institutions that offer many different learning modalities. As professional academic facilitators, faculty members will provide and guide (Dolence & Norris, 1995; O'Banion, 1997). First, they will offer diverse educational options based on the learning styles and preferences of their students; second, they may also act as learning brokers, helping to select the most appropriate course or program from both internal and external options for the individualized goals of their students.

Technological competencies will be an expected byproduct of an effective collegiate experience. The majority of incoming community college students have some level of computer literacy; requiring the equivalent of a basic information systems course may be inappropriate for many of them. Students must recognize that technology is a productivity tool that will help them succeed. Faculty members can facilitate this understanding by modeling through their own technical expertise and by requiring learning activities that necessitate computer usage. For students with technological deficiencies, self-paced upgrading programs could be developed and made available in-house or purchased through a vendor.

Finally, through positive academic experiences, students should see community colleges as their preferred vehicles for lifelong learning. Flexibility in meeting local needs and the ability to respond quickly to the changing requirements of business and industry will be even more critical in the years ahead. As we cultivate ongoing relationships that provide the learning opportunities our students require, we will solidify our role in the community as the educational provider of choice and ensure our continuing viability. In a competitive marketplace, we can indeed determine our own future success with a proactive approach to academic programming.

At Your Institution Discussion Points:

- How can we assist and support faculty members in embracing the new role of learning facilitator?
- How can colleges achieve a learner-centered focus while providing an environment where faculty feel valued and empowered?
- How can community colleges adopt a customer service orientation to attract and retain students?
- What barriers prevent us from being fast and flexible in meeting community and industry programming needs?

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Workforce Development in the Information Economy

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American community colleges have distinctively contributed to workforce development and, as a result, have significantly impacted their local communities. While colleges rightfully celebrate these programs as major innovations in higher education, the new demands of the information economy for a more knowledge-based workforce have created daunting challenges.

First, there is a growing desire for workforce development programs to demonstrate real outcomes for stakeholders. Students want programs that will lead them to careers, not just entry-level work. Employers want programs that give students the right skills, making them more productive. Communities want a system that will maintain the country's competitive edge in the international marketplace. Degrees, hours of programs, and other historic indicators of success are less important than outcomes.

American community colleges have distinctively contributed to workforce development and, as a result, have significantly impacted their local communities.

Second, new competitors with impressive financial and technological resources have entered the workforce development marketplace. Sometimes these are private competitors; sometimes they are public baccalaureate institutions that have adopted the community college's successful recipes and are even more flexible and customer driven than those colleges are. Because they focus their attention solely on specific programs and make no pretense of being comprehensive, these new entrants are attracting the attention of both employers and students.

Third, many new careers in teaching, business, and technology require baccalaureate degrees even for entry-level work. As a result, workforce development programs must now emphasize the integration of liberal arts skills in all technical program curricula.

Fourth, community colleges are faced with a growing heterogeneity of student learners. Program offerings need to cover a broad spectrum, providing career pathways for new high school graduates and specialty advanced technical programs for incumbent workers seeking specific industry certifications.

Finally, the new demands for workforce development create enormous challenges for college leaders. Many traditional programs and areas of technical competence in the industrial economy are less important in the era of the information economy. In many colleges, this can result in a skills imbalance and equipment mismatch. Colleges may need to recruit new technical faculty or retrain current faculty, or both, and these priorities require time and money.

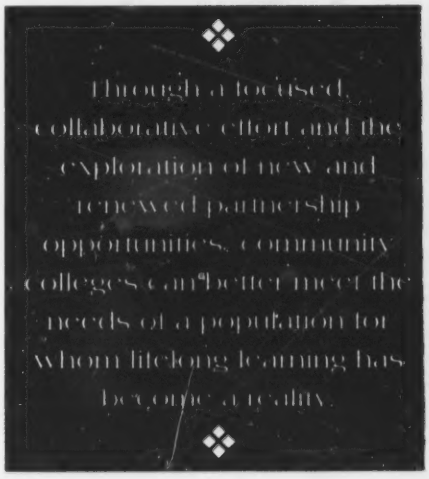
Why Is This Significant?

The demands of workforce development in the information economy challenge community colleges to focus their missions more sharply. Given both dwindling resources and increasing competition, colleges are thrust in a variety of directions (Bailey & Averianova, 1999). Tension is developing between the tradition of comprehensiveness and the need to focus on specialized programs that have more immediate results. Furthermore, since many of the customers are less interested in college credit, colleges are faced with a blurring of the lines between credit and noncredit offerings.

Since the private sector is demanding certification, skill standards, and other forms of nontraditional validation, institutions need to provide more portable credentials that have credibility in the labor market. Additionally, the emerging trend toward a more integrated curriculum that emphasizes academic and technical skills tends to undermine the existing culture at many institutions.

The response to these trends has been extremely diverse. Many community colleges have merged their credit and noncredit technical program offerings into a single division with a single focus under the leadership of a vice president for workforce development. Others have rapidly adopted certification programs in information technology and increased their noncredit offerings. Still others have begun to offer shorter, modular-sized segments of curriculum to meet the short-term needs of incumbent workers. The picture is far from clear, but a consensus is emerging in two areas.

First, community colleges are recognizing the new vocationalism by developing programs that lead to careers in occupations requiring baccalaureate degrees. Increasingly, teacher preparation, information technology, allied health, and business programs are dominating the new offerings of many community colleges. These programs fully integrate liberal arts and technical education, thus preparing individuals for both specialized employment and a bachelor's degree. Second, a greater use of certifications, modularized curricula, and other forms of externally driven instruction is occurring. Increasingly, colleges are meeting the needs of business and industry by developing new forms of credentialing and certifications. Often these are packaged as credit and noncredit programs and are developed by outside entities. (Bragg, 2001)


Through a focused, collaborative effort and the exploration of new and renewed partnership opportunities, community colleges can better meet the needs of a population for whom lifelong learning has become a reality.

The most important factor in resolving these issues is the profile of the local economy, specifically the needs of employers. This has emerged as the key element in determining community college offerings, sometimes more important than student demand and national trends.

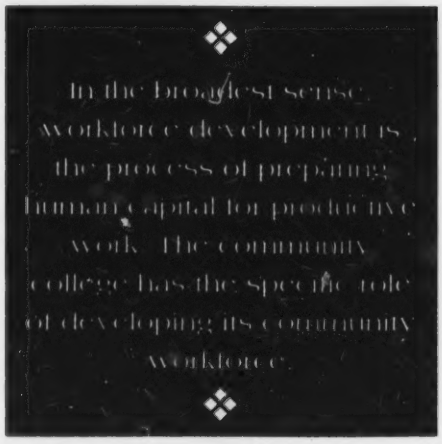
Strategies for Addressing Change

Community colleges can engage in a variety of strategic activities to meet changing student and workforce needs. Through a focused, collaborative effort and the exploration of new and renewed partnership opportunities, community colleges can better meet the needs of a population for whom lifelong learning has become a reality.

Concentrate and focus on subbaccalaureate labor market needs. Community colleges should consider developing niche market programs rather than comprehensive programs. The niches will be determined by the particular makeup of the local community served by the institution.

This may not correspond to the specific service area, but may be aligned more closely to the needs of the regional labor market. Technical training and specialization should occur within identified clusters of firms and with a work-based component. Anything less is simply unacceptable for community colleges. (Grubb, 1997)

The goal of workforce development is to prepare students not only for entry-level work within a cluster of firms, but also for a career that encourages promotion and advanced degrees. For this to occur, current disciplines should be reconfigured to address industry's specific needs while incorporating core competencies and skill standards that provide a foundation for advancement. Care should be taken to ensure that critical thinking, communication, and math are thoroughly integrated within course perspectives since they are necessary for students who pursue a baccalaureate degree. Collaborating with local industry, colleges need to construct career pathways that permit students to earn a bachelor's degree that is consistent with their occupational interests. Although students may choose not to continue, the pathway needs to be in place.


In the broadest sense, workforce development is the process of preparing human capital for productive work. The community college has the specific role of developing its community workforce.

Broaden the focus and activities of workforce development programs. In the broadest sense, workforce development is the process of preparing human capital for productive work. The community college has the specific role of developing its community workforce. It does this by enhancing skill capacity and improving the community's economic opportunity and quality of life. Programs that address this mandate span a broad range and include those that serve specific firms, train incumbent workers, provide career counseling and learning support, target specific groups such as workers with disabilities, or attract business leaders and entrepreneurial initiatives to the area.

Understand the importance of college experience. The success of any program is contingent upon understanding customer needs. If most young students attend postsecondary education because they want a baccalaureate degree as a means of obtaining a secure job, colleges must consider this motivation when designing workforce development programs. New programs should assume that students desire a college degree or credential that is valid in the external job market. Programs must include multiple learning activities based on curriculum that will prepare individuals for work and further education. The vocational education program that fits together with liberal arts for a coherent program of study can lead to a more rapid adoption of curriculum integration techniques, and perhaps even to the realization that the teaching skills of the vocational instructors have a specific place within these programs of study.

Professional development is essential for postsecondary workforce development administrators. One of the organizational problems confronting postsecondary workforce development is the lack of local administrative and faculty leadership to manage the process. If there is a difference between vocational education program management and the traditional liberal arts programs, then how are administrators trained to serve the business community in this blended capacity? The training and education practices of leading companies may serve as potential models for administrators to follow. Firms that have successfully redefined their organization and culture are models for postsecondary vocational education. (Grubb, 1998)

The workforce development mission has traditionally been a bright spot in community college practice. Whether this remains so in the future will depend on community college leaders recognizing the need to adapt to the changes posed by the new information economy.

At Your Institution Discussion Points

- What are the important occupations in your local subbaccalaureate labor market, and how is your college preparing learners for these occupations?
- What are the career pathways within these occupations, and how does your college prepare learners for them?
- How do you measure the success of your workforce development programs in meeting the needs of the communities you serve?
- How well has your institution integrated academic and vocational skills courses?

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Connecting to a Changing Community

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It would be possible to talk about the positioning of community colleges in this country before new immigrants enriched our communities, before public funds evaporated, before private sector competition became real, before major industries imploded, before hate and killing seared our skyline and proved we are vulnerable. It would be possible to think about what community colleges once were, the role they played, what they offered, whom they served. It would be possible, but it would not be practical.

The year 2002 brings not only renewed hope, but also the need for fresh thinking and rebuilding. Now is the time to transport ourselves from our history to our future – to move forward toward what is both possible and necessary for the 21st century community college.

Never was there a greater need to reach out to potential students, community and business leaders, and other sectors that can be both beneficiaries of and contributors to the community college.

The innovative community college will be more closely connected to its own community, far more knowledgeable about its community's everchanging composition, aware of the learning needs and expectations of community members and local businesses, and increasingly more agile in anticipating and responding to community needs.

During a strong economy in which available dollars come reasonably close to meeting an organization's needs, marketing, public relations, and development tend to be treated as add-ons. They are used to build support for the extras. Today these functions are vital to sustain the core and to fulfill the community college's role. And the strategies for successful outreach will have to extend far beyond traditional approaches. They will become much more personal.

Learning About Your Changing Community

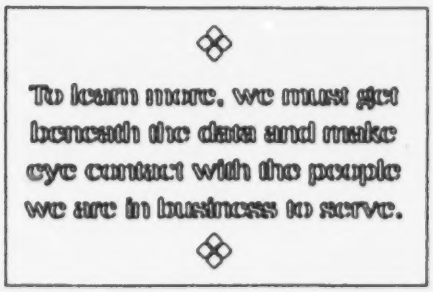
Never was there a greater need to reach out to potential students, community and business leaders, and other sectors that can be both beneficiaries of and contributors to the community college.

If you see your college as a community resource, as most community college leaders do, then you should be able to answer several important questions: How well do you know your community? Who lives there? What cultures and languages do they represent? Increasing diversity requires less generalization in our outreach and more specific knowledge about what is important to different people.

These days most of us are enamored with quantitative data. Data-driven decision making is one of our mantras, or should be. We have access to demographic information, studies and environmental scans conducted by various businesses and governmental agencies, questionnaires filled out by students and community members. But these provide only part of what we need to

know to truly be a college for and about our communities. To learn more, we must get beneath the data and make eye contact with the people we are in business to serve.

Listening Outside the College. Conducting focus groups, having individual conversations, and visiting places where community members gather are all ways for us to listen and learn. And the questions we ask go beyond the obvious ones that give us quantitative data. We want to learn more about personal insights, experiences, and perceptions:



- What kind of work do people in your community do? How do they spend their leisure time? What do they want to learn? What kind of a learning environment do they prefer?
- Who are your current students? Who are your potential students? What is the distribution of students by age, ethnicity, culture, and language? How has that changed in the last five years?
- What changes in the job market do your community's business leaders anticipate? What are the retraining needs? What experience do local employers have with workers who have attended your institution?

And, on the specific topic of your college:

- Why do people come to your college? Why don't they? Where do they learn about your college? What are their opinions about your college? Why do they hold these opinions?
- Which of your competitors do potential students choose? Why? What are the advantages they see in the other institutions?
- What positive and negative aspects of your college stand out to potential students? Business leaders? Community members?
- Who can benefit from the college's services?
- Who can bring value to the college through partnerships or resources?

Listening Inside the College. As you gather information to help you improve your outreach, a scan of your internal environment is equally important. Some people suggest that more than 80 percent of information about an educational institution comes from the people who work in or attend the institution. While the actual percentage might be debatable, the point is well taken. Think for a moment about your own situation. How many people in the community work for your college or have some kind of relationship with the college? How do they describe their experiences with the college? Are they uniformly positive? When those unfamiliar with the college hear negative comments from people associated with the college, how much weight do those negative experiences carry?

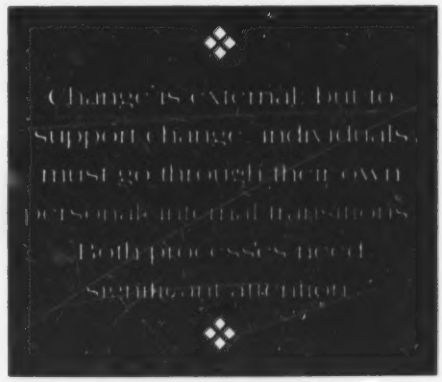
Acting on What You Learn

Strengthening What You Offer. What you learn outside your walls will inevitably lead you to evaluate what you are currently doing and make changes to better meet the needs of the people you serve. The following questions provide a guide:

- What could be your college's unique niche? What community needs are not being addressed that could be met by a program or service that fits within your college's mission or strategic plan?
- What do you do best? What are you now doing that you could do better? What can you stop doing because it no longer meets community needs?
- In which areas can and should the college compete for students?
- What is the low-hanging fruit? What relatively easy steps can you take that will have the greatest impact in the shortest amount of time?

Identifying New Resources. If, like most of us, you continue to rely primarily on public funding, you will need to uncover new revenue streams. Contrary to popular opinion that philanthropic giving dries up during a national crisis or recessionary period, history shows that giving rebounds fairly quickly (Sharp, 2001). It's important to remember that each individual or philanthropic organization gives for different reasons, often very personal ones. Never lose sight of the fact that many people's lives were changed by attending community colleges. These people are passionate about their experiences and may want to offer others the same opportunities. By offering a broad range of programs and services that specifically address different community needs, you will be giving individuals more opportunities to connect with your institution. With this in mind, identify the organizations, companies, foundations, and individuals with which the college should establish or renew relationships.

Building a New Internal Culture. As you consider what you are learning about your external and internal communities, you'll undoubtedly see a need to make changes in programs, in services, and in how you do business. Change is real and unavoidable. And often, it is not *change* that will do you in. It is individual reactions to change that will bury the best ideas. A proposal designed to strengthen an organization is often applauded, particularly if individuals believe the proposed changes will affect someone else. But the moment those changes hit closer to home and require any of us personally to change the way we do business, that's an entirely different story!


Change is external, but to support change, individuals must go through their own personal, internal transitions. Both processes need significant attention.

We quickly learn that if change doesn't go below the neck, nothing will happen. It is critical that, along with the external changes you are making, you have a complementary strategy for keeping abreast of the experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of the people connected to your organization. It is vital to involve many people in both deciding upon and carrying out needed changes. Change is external, but to support change, individuals must go through their own personal, internal transitions. Both processes need significant attention.

Community Means People. First, last, and always, remember that it's all about people. Both outside and inside our community colleges, the tasks are essentially the same: listening to people, connecting with people, creating partnerships with people – people coming together to bring renewed hope and possibility to a nation of learners.

At Your Institution Discussion Points

- How has your community changed in the last five years and how do those changes affect the college's programs and services?
- What programs or services need additional funds and where can you find new revenue streams to support them?
- What high-impact improvements or changes that respond to community needs can be made quickly?

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Linking Strategic and Financial Planning

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Community colleges lauded as successful share an important factor that over time has moved them beyond survival mode. These institutions thrive, due in large part to the vital steps each took long ago toward integrating systems of strategic and financial planning.

Local policymakers, legislators, and vocal members of the general public have made it clear that performance-based accountability is essential for future support of higher education. Current administrators increasingly recognize that, despite influence of either planned wisdom or blind luck, future viability is absolutely tied to outcomes data and the perceived effectiveness of decisions based upon this data. Accountability measures and institutional success are critically linked to strategic planning, resource allocation, and institutional effectiveness. This linkage serves as the foundation to financial stability propelling some community colleges to leadership success stories.

The Problems With Current Processes

Nationwide, public higher education spending – among the largest budget items for many states – increasingly competes with other public services such as welfare, health care, and corrections. The public is focusing on rising higher education costs, particularly in light of questionable results. Sadly, local processes provide little to stem this criticism. Information gathering and reporting methods are frequently nonexistent, are at differing stages of development, or deal with inappropriate, inconsistent, and often unnecessary data.

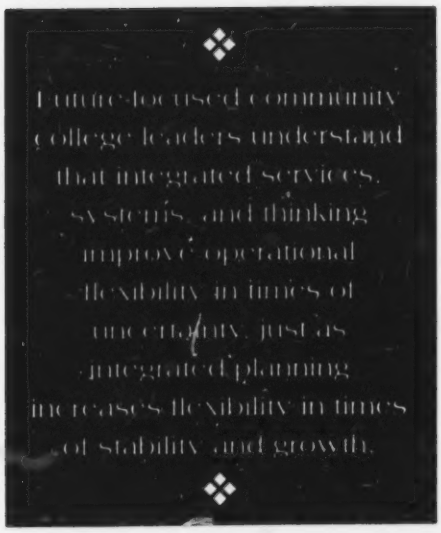
> As community colleges reframe their organizations to improve responsiveness to stakeholders, the ability to demonstrate the link between planning, budgeting, and assessment would reflect a move from a fragmented state to integration.

Through an intraorganizational lens, negative public perception is further compounded when requests for resources are assumed to be linked, but do not necessarily coincide, with the true needs of the department, division, college, or community. Many higher education sectors, including community colleges, spend vital resources moving requests through a complex budget development process and then wonder if the effort will equal the initial need; all too often it does not. As the gap continually widens between strategic planning at the basic organizational levels and central resource allocation, the mission and goals may match assessment data but they fail to connect the institution's relationship to its environment.

Why does all this happen? In many organizations, a variety of stand-alone systems are designed to link organizational planning with budgeting or institutional assessment with resource allocation, but a combined view is missing. Linking all three of these decision processes into a seamless

package could provide the key for improving both efficiency and effectiveness. As community colleges reframe their organizations to improve responsiveness to stakeholders, the ability to demonstrate the link between planning, budgeting, and assessment would reflect a move from a fragmented state to integration (AIR Professional File, 1997).

The Impact of Linkages: Planning, Budgeting, and Assessment


Future-focused community college leaders understand that integrated services, systems, and thinking improve operational flexibility in times of uncertainty, just as integrated planning increases flexibility in times of stability and growth.

Integration of planning, budgeting, and assessment encourages a continuum of accountability and offers community colleges the opportunity to align strategic planning objectives with action plans and with the necessary resources to support the forecasted objectives. Furthermore, linking both programmatic and nonprogrammatic institutional assessment helps community colleges determine the feasibility and desirability of operational activities. In addition, community colleges can reduce the manpower dedicated solely to budgeting and reallocate that effort toward monitoring, analysis, and innovation. Annual budgeting can be converted from a technical task that focuses primarily on matching college goals and measured outcomes with governing board goals and state legislative initiatives, to a systemic planning initiative that encourages consideration of needs at each level of the organization.

The potential impact of integrated planning on institutional accountability, however, depends in large part on management. Management remains the primary decision maker and is historically viewed as a crucial link for accomplishing institutional effectiveness. Future-focused community college leaders understand that integrated services, systems, and thinking improve operational flexibility in times of uncertainty, just as integrated planning increases flexibility in times of stability and growth. Such established management structures promote consistency and confidence in community colleges whose financial futures are tied to performance. Conversely, even the strongest nonintegrated systems of strategic planning, resource allocation, and assessment are adversely impacted by ineffective management support. Demonstrated in part through fragmented budget decisions, such management deficiency is symptomatic of inadequate planning systems and ultimately reflects negatively on the entire institution.

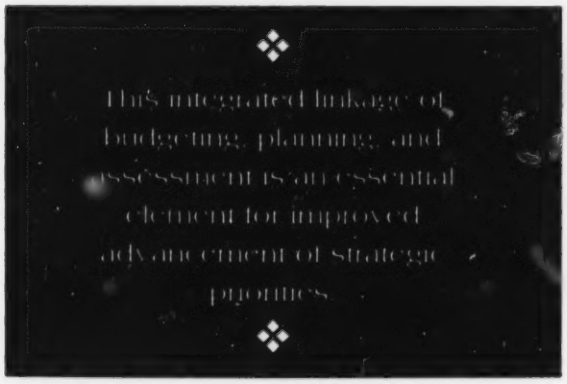
A Process for Change

Successful completion of several steps will position a community college for planning integration. The first step is *self-reflection*, designed to address the question, "Where are we now?" Self-reflection includes an evaluation of relevant factors, both internal and external, to the community college's environment. Before an entity can set realistic objectives, it must first know where it stands. Assessing organizational factors on a periodic basis is recommended, and these might include the appropriateness of the organizational structure, the nature of staff allocation to functional roles, the major policies and strategies of the organization, and alignment with meaningful goals.

The overall importance of continuing attention to maintaining college-wide effectiveness becomes apparent when any given segment of the strategic-planning model is related to the whole organization.

The second step in the integration process is a *survey of internal and external environmental issues*. A baseline survey is conducted to assess immediate and future issues challenging the community college's efforts in the planning, budgeting, and assessment areas. The survey may include the identification of a variety of elements such as college needs, department and division requirements, data gathering concerns, reporting issues, collegewide initiatives, accountability standards, and resource allocation and expenditure histories.

After the self-reflection and survey phases are completed, an *organizational structure* is devised. A reporting relationship to the Chief Executive Officer is strongly recommended. This structure provides the CEO with an overview of the relationship between pertinent positions and their assigned authority for achieving institutional objectives. Through this structure, issues will be identified particularly through cross-functional teams. The development of a formal reporting structure outlining responsibilities and delegated activities will begin to address the strengths and weaknesses of communication processes. The overall importance of communication in maintaining collegewide effectiveness becomes apparent when any given segment of the structure is viewed in relationship to the whole organization.


This integrated linkage of budgeting, planning, and assessment is an essential element for improved advancement of strategic priorities.

Once the organizational structure is determined, an *integrated planning process* is developed that defines the terms, objectives, and assumptions of future operations. Effective performance of the integrated planning process is extremely important.

The subsequent course of action clarifies ensuing stages of data gathering, assessment, strategic thinking, strategic initiatives, organizational planning, and accountability:

- Data drives well-founded decision making. Information is continually gathered from individual perspectives as well as from collective data banks, which gives decision makers measurable and trended data.
- Assessment supporting institutional effectiveness has two drivers, continuous improvement (internal focus) and accountability (external focus). Balance between the two points of view is required: colleges meet expectations from accrediting agencies for continuous improvement while boards, legislatures, and citizens expect accountability.
- Deliberations regarding the institution's ability or limitations to commit resources –financial, human, and otherwise – to designated goals established by the leadership are facilitated and supported with clear, specific, and pertinent information.

In sum, colleges recognize the most important outcome of the integrated planning process is that common goals and concerns of accountability become addressed in a consistent and connective manner. This integrated linkage of budgeting, planning, and assessment is an essential element for improved advancement of strategic priorities. Over time it will result in long-term institutional financial stability and will develop momentum to propel the college toward a more successful future.

At Your Institution Discussion Points

- What would a successful linkage between strategic and financial planning look like at your institution?
- What governance structure best supports the successful development and implementation of an integrated planning process?
- What are the potentially lasting benefits and challenges of an integrated planning process? Of not implementing an integrated planning process?
- Do the necessary resources exist to implement the strategy? What current software applications and data collection and reporting processes will require modifications or replacement?

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A Time for the Community College: 21st Century Dynamics, Trends, and Imperatives

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We live in a time of drastic change. Issues of national security, demographics, education, economy, and technology continue to drive debate and dialogue, only to become more complex as we consider the confluence of these forces on American society. Moreover, the attacks of September 11 have further added to the feeling of change. *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *U.S. News and World Report* all have noted that this event has been a powerful and poignant turning point, leading toward more collective civic engagement and individual personal reflection. We are taking more time, both collectively and individually, to assess that which we value: our faith, family, and friends, as well as the privilege of living in a society where we are free to speak, worship, and learn.

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Today the comprehensive community college is woven into the fabric of American life, and increasingly into the social tapestry of the world.

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As we in community colleges, along with citizens throughout this country, continue our personal and professional recovery from the terrorist attacks, we are searching for everyday ways to help make a difference (Milliron, 2001). Two significant actions we can take that will have a profound impact on our future are to thoughtfully assess what we value about our work in community college education and to explore our institutions' position in the community, state, nation, and world. In these times of drastic change, we must step back and reflect. Doing things as they have always been done will prepare us for, as Hoffer calls it, "a world that no longer exists." In short, we must learn together to move toward a brighter tomorrow.

Supporting learning to create that brighter tomorrow is exactly what the community college movement has been doing for the last century. Today the comprehensive community college is woven into the fabric of American life, and increasingly into the social tapestry of the world. The students of community colleges run multinational corporations, fly through space, star in movies, provide leadership in state houses, and map the human genome (AACC, 2002). Keenly in our consciousness today, however, is the fact that our students are more often police officers, firefighters, emergency medical workers, nurses, and military personnel. How many of our students *were* the heroes of September 11?

Unfortunately, we are often so busy teaching, learning, and serving in community colleges that we lose sight of dynamics that place our institutions at the forefront of national dialogue.

Community colleges have emerged as influential partners and essential contributors in dealing with national economic, political, and social dynamics. In addition, community colleges are wrestling with a number of compelling trends that are challenging them more than ever to ground their policies, programs, and practices in learning. And if we leverage these dynamics and trends, and then engage our policymakers in supporting key imperatives that speak to our core values and point to our powerful potential, we truly can make this *a time for the community college*.

Dynamics

Given that community colleges only recently gained national prominence, it is not surprising that some policymakers are just beginning to embrace them as lynch pin institutions – essential to the health and welfare of their communities and this country. The more deeply policymakers explore the educational, economic, political, and social dynamics on the road ahead, the more likely they may be to argue that the role of the community college should assume center stage.

Community colleges...only recently gained national prominence (and) policymakers are just beginning to embrace them as lynch pin institutions – essential to the health and welfare of their communities and this country.

The **education dynamics** at play demonstrate that many community colleges have become a nexus of lifelong learning in their communities. Today more than 1,100 community colleges serve more than 10 million students across the United States. The broad range of programs in the comprehensive community college makes it hard to identify a single mission for these institutions, but in general, community college students obtain certificates, diplomas, and degrees in credit and noncredit areas: college transfer, terminal and transfer technical programs, workforce development programs with industry, basic skills and developmental programs, adult basic education and GED, seniors programs, and avocational programs. Most importantly, community colleges do all these things as integral community partners, tightly aligning their programming to local community needs.

The emergence of the community college is testament to America's emergence as a nation of lifelong learners. Many jobs are moving from the manufacturing to the knowledge sector. Jobs in the knowledge economy require more education, but more importantly, continuing education. A recent *Faces of the Future* study from the American Association of Community Colleges noted that almost 25 percent of students served by community colleges nationwide across credit and noncredit programs have already earned at least a bachelor's degree. These students are what the National Alliance of Business Certification Panel members refer to as "golden hires"—

students well versed in the liberal arts, but also committed to attaining greater skills, particularly in the technical arena. In this way, the education dynamics related to the community college are deeply tied to our national economy.

The community college is increasingly well-positioned in the **economic dynamics** of our nation as well. Bob Jones, President of the National Alliance of Business, touts community colleges in almost every education-related presentation he makes, and he forcefully advocates the position of community colleges as a key resource in serving the burgeoning certification and training market. Even more telling, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan noted in his September 2000 testimony to a congressional committee that community colleges have become an essential element of the U.S. economy – particularly in this time of great change:

> This process of stretching toward our human intellectual capacity is not likely to end any time soon. Indeed, the dramatic increase in the demand for on-the-job technical training and the major expansion of the role of our community colleges in teaching the skills required to address our newer technologies are persuasive evidence that the pressures for increased learning are ongoing. (Greenspan, 2000)

As the need for learning increases, particularly in the area of technology, community colleges are seen as a major driver of economic growth. The recent 21st Century Workforce Commission conducted broad national research to determine key issues and policy agendas to support the needs of the information technology workforce. They specifically noted the contributions of the nation's community colleges and highlighted their role in their *eHandbook of Best Practices*. The Commission's findings are substantive and impressive.

In addition to demands for information technology, the need for K-12 teachers and nurses is driving policymakers to consider community colleges as key partners in meeting the economic challenges resulting from shortages in these occupations. Community colleges are designing fast-track programs to transfer teacher candidates to local universities, developing programs for alternative teacher certification, and offering staff development opportunities for existing teachers (Boggs & Bragg, 1999; Gaskin & Solley, 2002). Moreover, community colleges are playing a key role in recruiting, retaining, supporting, and graduating nurses. Nationally, students who earn associate degrees in nursing are highly successful on the Registered Nurse Exam, and are in high demand as transfer students to Bachelor of Science nursing programs. Increasingly, community colleges are developing flexible, fast-track, quality programs in response to occupational shortages that significantly impact the economy.

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This economic positioning also contributes to the growing **political dynamics** that favor community colleges. Given that community colleges are now clearly seen as necessary for economic growth and for transitioning displaced workers to new careers, politicians recognize that supporting community colleges helps drive a key voting issue: the economy. Governor Paul Patton of Kentucky cited economic development as a major reason for reorganizing his state's community and technical colleges, pulling them away from the powerful University of Kentucky System and creating a separate entity called the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). Fifteen years ago, this move would likely have created a political uproar and may have removed a politician in his position from office.

Additional economic and demographic issues point to other political dynamics. The age range of the more than 10 million community college students spans from 16 to over 80, with an average age of 29. This demographic stands in stark contrast to university students, who are, on average, 18-24 years of age and represent a cohort that has one of the poorest voting participation rates. Simply stated, community college cohorts are far more likely to vote. Age is not the only issue, however. Political pollster John Zogby is quick to note that a key demographic category in today's elections – particularly in close national elections – is that of the $20,000-$50,000 wage earner. Community colleges, more often than universities, are connected to this economic demographic.

Although community colleges and their students clearly are not the largest campaign donors, the voting habits of community college students point to increased political prominence for community colleges. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the final weeks of the 2000 presidential campaign, then Governor Bush and Vice President Gore often spoke from community college campuses in Florida and Michigan.

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But more important than the educational, economic, and political dynamics to many community college educators are the **social dynamics**. In an increasingly diverse, dynamic, and connected society, community colleges are essential to help citizens live and learn well. For example, community college educators care about few things more than the issue of access – opening the door of higher education to those traditionally less likely to engage this pathway to possibility. And, with a tradition of open-door admissions, low tuition, flexible programming, customized student services, and quality learning opportunities, community colleges continue to be the pathway to higher education for minorities. Based on U.S. Census Bureau data, by the year 2015, minority enrollments in community colleges are projected to increase by approximately 12 percent, while the white student population is projected to decrease by approximately eight percent. Overall, 46 percent of all African-American students, 55 percent of all Hispanic students,

55 percent of Asian/Pacific Islander students, and 55 percent of all Native American students in higher education attend community colleges (NCES). In addition, more than half of community college students are first-generation students. Clearly, the community college open-door philosophy is meeting, and will continue to meet, the social need for access to higher education.

Consider also the issue of the at-risk: those students who lack the academic or social preparation to succeed in education. Bob McCabe (2000), in *No One to Waste: A Report to Public Decision-Makers and Community College Leaders*, documents the increasing number of students who are underprepared and details the danger of ignoring them. However, he also shows how well-designed, strongly supported developmental education programs at community colleges are often the bridge that brings these students into productive lives in society, helping them learn to help themselves and move toward a brighter future. More important, however, are the key data documenting that the pennies spent on supporting community college developmental programs lead to dollars saved in the welfare and criminal justice systems.

Closely mirroring this issue are the concerns of many surrounding the Digital Divide. In *Access in the Information Age: Community Colleges Bridging the Digital Divide*, the authors document the burgeoning populations with limited-to-no access to technology, particularly the U.S. African-American and Hispanic populations (de los Santos, de los Santos Jr., & Milliron, 2001). However, as the authors note, community colleges are particularly well positioned to help these populations avoid being "observers of a digital world passing them by, bit by bit" (p. 17). Community colleges are the best vehicles to help adults access the hardware, software, and training necessary to work in an information economy, not to mention the technology and change savvy necessary to live in a connected world.

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This issue of living well in a connected world emphasizes a critical social dynamic: the importance of what Wilson et al. (2000) call *21st Century Learning Outcomes*. These outcomes include skills in communication, numeracy, technology, information management, personal management, interpersonal relations, community awareness, critical thinking, and problem solving. It is the need for these skills that should drive us to support what has been called in other venues "education in a digital democracy" (Milliron & Miles, 2000). This should further inspire us to support community colleges' open access, high-quality, learning-centered education as a way to bring light where there often is none. Because, in a global community that is often split between the "lexus and the olive tree," global connections and local needs, complex systems and simple conflicts, and haves and have nots, open-access education is a powerful pathway to bridge these divides and bring hope for all (Friedman, 2000).

Trends

With the winds of these educational, economic, political, and social dynamics at the back of the community college, one could say these institutions are poised to make a powerful impact. However, to fully examine community college issues and catalyze our potential, we must also be aware of, and respond to, the inexorable trends that face these vital institutions. By so doing, we can raise our sail and move forward.

In *Seven Signs on the Road Ahead for Community Colleges*, major trends facing community colleges are outlined (Milliron & Miles, 2000), and these trends are upon us. **Enrollment pressures** are surfacing, with many colleges seeing double-digit enrollment growth for a number of reasons: the baby-boom echo, increased need for continuous upgrade and workforce development, and a down economy leading to an increase in displaced workers. Moreover, students are more diverse and increasingly "swirled" – more students using community colleges for short-cycle training, reverse transfer, or "graduate school" options (Quinley & Quinley, 1998; Daggett, 2001). All the while, more faculty, administrators, and staff are leaving in **turnover waves** due to the large cohorts approaching retirement age. Correspondingly there is an acute need to prepare new faculty and staff for the realities of work in the community college and to build their commitment to the unique educational mission of these institutions.

And as more students come and more staff leave, government, business, and educational entities increasingly want to work with community colleges to develop **partnership programs**. One-stop centers, customized training, dual-credit offerings, and rapid transfer programs are only a few of the dynamic partnerships into which community colleges enter (Andrews, 2001). Moreover, high-tech firms are tasking community colleges as these institutions increasingly become the hubs of certification for corporations such as Cisco, Microsoft, Oracle, and Novell. As they ramp up these certification programs, community colleges also wrestle with their own **technology transitions**, implementing new administrative, academic, and communication systems at an alarmingly fast rate. Ironically, all these new high-end programs are coming at a time when the issues of the **at-risk** are still compelling community colleges to develop robust programs for the least prepared students.

Ironically, these pressures and trends are growing at a time when community college funding is being cut by states strapped for cash in the midst of a recession. Still, there is the driving press for **funding accountability** to document how public funds are being used and what outcomes our institutions are achieving. This increasing inspection, combined with rising societal expectations, is driving many community colleges to increase their fund-raising capacity, something that is quite new to many community colleges (Babitz, 2001; Ried, 2000). Community colleges are significantly behind their university colleagues in the pursuit of extramural support, with total community college endowment income less than one percent of the total endowment income in higher education—an amazing statistic considering community colleges serve more than half of the first-time students! Because of these funding dynamics, more and more community college presidents have embraced fundraising as an aspect of their role.

Finally, and arguably most prominent, community colleges are tackling many of these trends by embracing a philosophy of "learning first." They are experiencing a **learning renaissance** of sorts, looking through their policies, practices, and programs and talking about how they might truly ensure that they are supporting learning in the best way possible (O'Banion & Milliron, 2001). More and more community colleges are "taking learning seriously," working hard to ensure that their limited energies and efforts are making a difference for learners and learning.

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By listening to everyone from their best teachers to front line support staff, they are considering all options to improve and expand learning – and to document the outcomes. However, this transition to more learning-centered institutions would be greatly aided by supporting the following three-part policy framework.

Imperatives

To ensure that we are able to respond to the dynamics and trends in community college education, we have to ask our policymakers to join the cause. We need to encourage them to target their efforts toward supporting our commitment to three key imperatives: creativity, connectivity, and catalysis. These imperatives are at the core of community college educational philosophy, and with the support of thoughtful policy targeted at reinforcing them, the true potential of community colleges can be unleashed.

Creativity

First, legislators should use policy to encourage community colleges to continue their **commitment to creativity**. Particularly in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, community colleges were called the "speedboats" of American higher education (Glaser, 1971). Today, we are seeing a similar dexterity, with community colleges working hard to provide anytime, anyplace learning in a wide variety of modalities. Whether in class, online, over microwave broadcast, via cable stations, through video classes, or simple open-entry open-exit labs, community colleges often provide compelling examples of creative educators solving learning challenges.

However, several policy frameworks lock community colleges into traditional higher education structures based on K-12 or university traditions. Community colleges are unique educational institutions that can partner well with other educational sectors; however, policies that encourage the use of more creative programming to meet the needs of learners in credit and noncredit areas are needed. Most troublesome are funding formulas that actually encourage the traditional architecture of higher education, funding colleges on seat time as opposed to learning outcomes. Even more troubling are the myriad of rules and regulations that dictate process in community colleges as opposed to targeting outcomes. To help community colleges locally and nationally, policymakers should resist these trends and analyze existing and, especially, new policy proposals

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❖

with the imperative of fostering community college creativity. The question driving this imperative should be, "Do these policies foster creativity in community colleges?"

Connections

The second policy imperative is to foster community college connectivity. Community colleges work hard to connect with their students. The open-access mission drives them to learn more about students, adapt to their needs, and provide resources to help them on their educational journeys. Community college educators connect many of their students – particularly first-generation students – to a world of higher education and opportunity that had been little more than a dream. We connect them to other students who are working for a better life for themselves or their families. We connect them to job opportunities, service experiences, and civic engagement, opening up new life paths and life experiences.

To foster connectivity, policymakers should continue to focus on increasing access to higher education. We must resist the urge to raise tuition, shift student funding from grants to loans, and make more cumbersome the process of obtaining financial aid. Each of these items is a significant barrier to those who could benefit most by connecting with community colleges. Moreover, although many community colleges need continued and increased investment in campus infrastructure to serve students, policy should also focus on supporting community college efforts to use information technology and modern communication systems to connect with students.

Generation Y has come to expect technology tools—phone systems, websites, e-mail, and ERP/CRM/LRM systems—and returning students increasingly need these tools to obtain access to

education while working or living at a distance (Carnevale & Fry, 2000). The explosion of proprietary institutions offering online services illustrates not only the growing learning needs of our country, but also the imperative for strong support of our community colleges in the integration of quality technology in learning. Community colleges of the future will need to be adept at blending high-tech and high-touch as they create strong connections with their learners. Perhaps the best policy shift in this area is to mirror information technology investment policy more closely to funding of capital projects, particularly buildings. Our policymakers need to realize that technology is almost a cost of entry into the education space of today. Our Web systems and other technology-based connection tools complement our buildings as venues for connection, and enable our faculty and staff as purveyors of connection, particularly with commuting students.

Another connection imperative involves supporting policy that encourages dual enrollment programs between high schools and community colleges. The College Board and ACT are advocating these programs because they create strong connections to students, preparing them for the world of higher education (ACT, 2002; College Board, 2002). Moreover, dual enrollment programs help advanced students get a head start on their college education, not "wasting" their senior year, as many studies indicate often happens (Andrews, 2002).

Closely mirroring this strategy is the support for policy that fosters transfer of students from community colleges to four-year schools. Most transfer students move to the university after only 30-40 hours of coursework. However, when asked, these students would say that their community college experience met their goals completely. Policy should not punish community colleges when they meet student goals; instead, useful connection-centric policy should be developed to support and positively impact students, colleges, and communities. For example, South Carolina created a performance-based funding system that rewarded graduation from the state's technical colleges over transfer. As a result, student support services had few incentives to foster transfer prior to graduation, which is *clearly the national norm.* (Education Commission of the States, 2002). The fundamental question for policymakers, then, should be, "Do these policies help community college educators enhance connections: connections to students and connections between the community college and K-12, universities, and business?"

Catalysts

Policymakers must use their roles to **encourage community colleges to be catalysts.** Just as a catalyst in chemistry starts a reaction, community colleges help students spark the fire, experience the *aha*, and turn on the lights. By being catalysts of learning, community colleges can enable educational advancement. But policymakers have to design programs that encourage and document learning-centered practices. In particular, policymakers should reward colleges for doing the hard work of establishing frameworks that document learning outcomes in a variety of areas. Creating a culture of evidence that documents the catalytic work they do in learning is vital if we want learning to be at the center of our policies, programs, and practices (McClenney, 2001; O'Banion, 1998).

In the same vein, legislators should encourage policy that allows community colleges to continue catalyzing economic opportunity. Almost every major study on the impact of education demonstrates that an individual's earning potential is enhanced by taking at least one community college class. Specifically supporting programs that create linkages between learning and work, supporting corporate partnerships, workforce development programs, and internships will help community colleges further catalyze the economic potential of their students.

Another policy issue related to catalyzing economic opportunity is the lack of consistent and effective funding for workforce development. In many communities, there is no more powerful role for local community colleges than the valuable services they provide through workforce and economic development. Still, because of traditional funding mechanisms based on K-12 or university models, community colleges are biased toward academic, credit-based programs that earn full formula funding. Larry Warford's article, "Funding Lifelong Learning: A National Priority," outlining the lack of focus and total disparity in workforce development funding nationwide (Warford, 2002) is a valuable resource for policymakers who really want to engage the imperative of catalyzing economic opportunity.

Moreover, if legislators can embrace the imperatives of targeting policy toward creativity, connection, and catalysis, it can be a new day for community colleges.

Most of all, community colleges should be given the mandate to continue to catalyze empowerment, helping our students take personal responsibility for their own learning and their own lives. Community college programs that support civic engagement and service learning are but two clear examples of how our institutions can help students become aware of a world beyond their expectations. In addition, the core principles of academic freedom, critical thinking, and creativity must be not only encouraged, but also protected by policy. If we want a nation of free thinkers, with the ability to question well and live well, then we must *charge* and *free* educators to catalyze student empowerment. The question for policymakers should be, "Do these policies charge and free community college educators to be catalysts?"

While there are significant challenges for community colleges, and our country, one could argue that community colleges have never been better positioned to make a difference. Especially if we – together with policymakers – step back, consider, and leverage the educational, economic, political, and social dynamics while helping community colleges tackle the trends with a keen focus on learning. Moreover, if legislators can embrace the imperatives of targeting policy toward creativity, connection, and catalysis, it can be a new day for community colleges.

But, to what end? Is it just about greater funding, respect, or credibility? I don't think so. These are important, and they should come our way if community colleges partner in the creation of thoughtful policy to meet the challenges outlined here. However, most community college educators will tell you they do what they do for different reasons. When asked, "To what end?" they might respond in any of several ways: To the end of continuing to lead the less privileged in our society to a brighter path. To the end of continuing to fuel the middle class and enabling our economy to recover and expand. To the end of empowering our students, helping them earn well, learn well, and live well – truly helping them live an examined and full life. To the end of preparing the heroes of tomorrow who will take on challenges like September 11, often giving their lives to help others. To the end of helping those who may be vulnerable to the hate and anger that fuel the actions of the terrorists to see another path, to wake them up and show them another way (Milliron, 2001). To the end of doing the hard work it takes to make the world a better place, one student at a time.

And as a fellow community college educator who shares these purposes, *I modestly propose it really is a time for the community college.*

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League for Innovation in the Community College

The League for Innovation in the Community College is an international organization dedicated to catalyzing the community college movement. The League hosts conferences and institutes, develops Web resources, conducts research, produces publications, provides services, and leads projects and initiatives with more than 700 member colleges, 100 corporate partners, and a host of other government and nonprofit agencies in a continuing effort to make a positive difference for students and communities. Information about the League and its activities is available at www.league.org.

Institute for Future Studies

The Institute for Future Studies at Macomb Community College strives to ensure the College's leadership position in a dynamic environment by defining issues and formulating strategies that enhance the College and the community college movement. It provides leaders and decision-makers strategic advantage by understanding and capitalizing on the societal and programmatic forces impacting community colleges.

The Institute offers information on trends, practices, and implementation strategies by scanning the environment, tracking trends, conducting studies, identifying issues and exploring proactive strategies, highlighting and disseminating best practices, and providing professional development opportunities. For more information, contact Noreen Thomas at thomasn@macomb.edu.

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